Exploring the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession through a feminist poststructuralist and intersectional lens

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Abstract

This thesis explores the career management experiences of twenty-five female, middle managers in the HR profession working in a range of UK private, public and non-for-profit organisations. A feminist poststructuralist and intercategorical intersectional (McCall, 2005) lens of gender, ethnicity and class was applied to explore how gendered dominant discourses competed and were negotiated in the context of the career management experiences and outcomes of the women. The findings of this research contribute to what can be considered the relatively small body of academic literature that has examined the careers of HR managers and women in the HR profession. Arguably, surprisingly small due to the focus for continuing professional development and career management within the profession. The feminist poststructuralism and the intersectional lens applied here allowed for new insights into the career management experiences of the women from shifting and complex subject positions to be identified. In doing so, marginalised voices were foregrounded in the context of how gendered dominant professional discourses impacted their career management experiences in competing and affiliated ways, providing the opportunity for new reflections on the impact of discourses in profession. The key findings of the research revealed the gendered nature of mainstream HRM and diversity management discourses impacted the career management experiences of the women through the restricted opportunities for training, complex positioning of female role models within the profession, and restricted opportunities for career planning due to the pressures of managing in the middle and the HR generalist role. The intersectional lens of the research also allowed for counterintuitive localities of career management privilege to be identified from what initially could be considered marginalised positions.

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List of Abbreviations

BME Black Minority Ethnic

CDA Critical Discourse Analysis

CIPD Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

CPD Continuing professional development

ER Employment relations

HR Human Resources

HRM Human Resource Management

FPDA Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis

OD Organisation Development

QDAS Qualitative Data Analysis Software

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1. CHAPTER ONE; Introduction

This chapter explores the main theoretical and contextual considerations that inform the research. The problematic nature of career management at the middle management level and implications for vertical segregation in the Human Resource (HR) profession is identified. Poststructuralist feminist theory, intersectionality and discourse analysis are introduced, as the main theoretical and methodological concerns shaping the research. This chapter goes on to highlight how analysing the role of discourses in the career management experiences of middle managers in the (HR) profession through a feminist poststructuralist and intersectional lens (McCall, 2005) can provide new insights into career management strategies and practices within the profession that offer the potential for transformational change in relation to the careers of women in the HR profession.

1.1 Statement of Intent

The aim of the research is to explore the role of discourses in shaping the career management experiences of middle managers in the HR profession at the intersections of gender, ethnicity and class. As in other professions women in HR have made significant developments into junior and middle management posts in the last 50 years but remain proportionally disrepresented at senior and the most senior levels in the profession (Broadbridge and Fielden, 2018: 10). Existing literature examining the career management experiences of women in the HR profession and issues associated with the glass ceiling in the profession have tended to treat women, as a homogenous group (see Legge, 1987, Gooch, 1994; Thompson, 2004; Ackah and Heaton, 2003 & 2006; Brandl et al, 2008; Pichler et al, 2008 Reichel et al, 2010). This research aims to apply an intersectional analysis to understand the continuation of vertical segregation from a none homogenous female stand point position. A key ontological facet of intersectional research is not treating women, as a fixed or universal category (Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2016).

Currently the only available national data relating to the position of women in HR is based on gender. Analysis of the most recent census data reveals that more than six in ten people working in Human Resource Development are women. Revealingly, the proportion of women is highest amongst HR administrators (80%) followed by HR officers (68%) and HR

managers and directors (62%) (Philpott, 2014). In accordance with other feminised professions, the percentage of men in the profession and the number of senior positions that they occupy is inversed (Woodhams, Lupton and Cowling, 2015). Vertical segregation exits across economies and occupations but is particularly, pronounced in feminised occupations (Huppatz, 2015). As one of the symptoms of gendered occupations, men are more likely to hold the senior and most powerful positions in a range of highly feminised professions, including social work and social care, nursing, teaching and librarianship (Lupton, 2006). It is for this reason that this research examines the career management experiences of middle managers in the HR profession, to explore how gender intersects with ethnicity and class and shapes progression or otherwise, into higher management positions.

In doing so contemporary approaches to career management will be explored. 'New' models of career management differ from early theories of career management that were based on the thinking of linear models or career advancement based typically in one or two organisations (Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk, 2010). Gender studies have sought to expose the way in which organisations and ultimately careers have been structured and organised to the privilege of men (Broadbridge and Fielden, 2018). Whilst 'new' model of careers such as the protean model (Briscoe and Hall, 2006) recognises greater diversity of gender experience, specific models that are argued to reflect female careers more accurately have emerged, such as the Kaleidoscope Career (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006), and Frayed Career (Sabelis and Schilling, 2013). This thesis, as per the feminist poststructuralist philosophical grounding of the research, does not impose one model of contemporary career management to analyse the experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession. Instead, it seeks to explore how the discursive practices of the participants have been shaped by, and can be related to, the range of discourses emerging from the dominant models. In addition, career models have been critiqued for being descriptive and fluid with a plethora of terminology (Baruch, Szucs and Gunz, 2014). As such, the emphasis in this research is how the dominant discourses associated with these models form and shape the discursive experiences of the women through the intersectional lens.

Feminist poststructuralism and intersectionality is for some an easy marriage, as they both view the constructs of gender in non-binary ways (Davis, 2008). Both perspectives highlight how focusing on just one social category can oversimplify and obscure the causes and experience of inequality. Intersectional research allows for localities of privilege to be

exposed outside of dominant groups and to expand understandings of advantage and disadvantage beyond binary social categories (Atewologun and Sealy, 2014). Arguably, the use of binary categories has created a focus on diversity management practices based on deficit models of marginalised groups and have contributed to the slow progress in addressing inequalities, in relation to professional and organisational outcomes for women in organisations (Rodriguez et al, 2016).

 The persistence of vertical segregation in the HR profession makes appealing the exposing of hegemonic discourses and transformative knowledge that can be achieved through intersectional analysis. Given the array of terminology and approaches associated with intersectional research it is important at the outset to specify the approach to intersectionality adopted (Sigle-Rushton, 2013). The seminal intersectionality article by McCall (2005) is commonly drawn upon and cited to support the design and approach to intersectional research in business and employment studies (Kelan, 2014). Writing in Signs McCall (2005: 1773) proposes three approaches to intersectional research based on how social categories, such as gender, race and class are viewed from the perspective of the researcher. This is in relation to how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of social life. As per the poststructuralist grounding of the research McCall's intercategorical intersectional approach is adopted in this thesis, as it recognises the role specific social categories play in the continuation of differential treatment and outcomes. The intercategorical approach also provides space for deconstructing dominant or hegemonic analytical social categories, such a gender, ethnicity and class. This allows for understanding the social world from the poststructuralist position that subjects and their experiences of social categories are fluid and multiple (Baxter, 2003) and avoids the presentation of social categories as fixed, which could overly simplify and reproduce social inequality (Holvino, 2010).

 This approach to intersectional research supports the poststructuralist feminist grounding of the work, which recognises the fluidity of the social positioning of gender. In this respect social categories are not outright rejected but the emphasis is on *deconstructing* categories and seeking to understand how these categorisations have been established through discursive practices that are repetitive and yield power (McCall, 2005). Poststructuralist feminism and intercategorical intersectionality allows for the recognition that positions of privilege and disadvantage can be non-fixed and fluctuating (Nash, 2008 and Tatli and Ozbilgin, 2012).

One of the main advantages of adopting an intersectional approach is that it allows for a more nuanced and non-deficit approach that focuses on identifying how both privilege and disadvantage are maintained, constructed and fluctuate dependent on context (Tatli and Ozbilgin, 2012). A key goal for poststructuralist feminism is to provide a space for marginalised or silenced female voices and to reveal alternative discursive practices that resist hegemonic discourses that maintain power structures and unequal outcomes (Baxter, 2003, 2007 and 2017). Revealing alternative career management discourses from intersectional locations amongst female middle managers in the HR profession provides the opportunity for developing more nuanced guidance and career management approaches within the profession.

1.2 The role of gender, ethnicity and class in the career management experiences of middle managers in the HR profession

 Identifying or selecting the social identities (and the desirability of doing this) is a key challenge within intersectional research (Davis, 2008). The position taken here supports Healy et al (2011) and Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe (2016) that all research requires making choices and intersectional analysis can be partial in the extent to which *all* potential privilege or disadvantage can be revealed in any one study. As endorsed by Warner and Shields (2013) it is important to explore the context of your research and identify the most relevant categories. The next section identifies why gender, ethnicity and class were selected, as most relevant when exploring the careers of middle managers within the HR profession. As outlined above the nature of certain research questions and objectives, as per this research lend themselves to seeking to deconstruct the role of social categories in shaping the experiences of women (Mooney, 2016). As such McCall (2005) emphasizes in the intercategorical approach for not an outright rejection of social categories but instead attempts should be made to seek to understand the active gender, ethnic and class processes at play in shaping the nature of social categories and how they are understood in a given context.

 The following discussions identify gender, ethnicity and class, as important social categories in seeking to understand the career management experiences of women in middle management positions in the HR profession. It is argued that vertical segregation in HR is particularly vexing given the profession's commitment to the promotion of equality, diversity

and inclusion, as contained within the CIPDs Code of Conduct. HR professionals are encouraged through the CIPDs professional standards to be 'diversity champions' (see CIPD, 2018) and yet diversity issues affecting closer to home are rarely acknowledged in mainstream HR. This is perhaps unsurprising when we consider how critical management theorists have highlighted how models and theories of strategic HRM and diversity management, which advocate utilising the full range of human capital that exists within organisations, are often left wanting when it comes to gender (Truss, 2002) ethnicity (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006) and class.

The lost voice of ethnicity is evidenced in the career management experiences of women in the HR profession in a number of ways. The CIPD does not publish membership figures in relation to ethnicity and membership grade, which could indicate seniority of position. Ethnicity is applied here instead of race, as it is less contested and applied more commonly in the UK in relation to diversity data and statistics (Atewologun, Sealy and Vinnicombe, 2015). In addition, The Office for National Statistics (ONS) define ethnicity as a broader concept to race, as it combines nationality, culture, religion, citizenships and customs associated with dress. Race is more commonly associated with differences between people based on intrinsic physical differences, including skin colour (ONS, 2018). Whilst there is little persuasive evidence that shared intellectual, psychological or moral characteristics can be applied to people on the basis of their skin colour the perception of difference is persuasive in stereo-tying and creating inequalities between different groups of people (Kamenou, 2007). As such the term 'race' cannot be supported by the poststructuralist positioning of the research, which understands social categories, as discursively produced rather than innately fixed. Race is only applied in the thesis to deconstruct the way in which 'race' and 'racism' is used discursively by participants but the term ethnicity is applied more broadly throughout the other chapters of the thesis. Ethnicity data is commonly collated in relation to employment, which is why it is perplexing there is very limited empirical information relating to the position or experiences of women from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the HR profession. There is also an absence of ethnic women's perspectives in HRM theory and literature, which led Kamenou and Fearfull (2006) to describe ethnic minority women in HRM, as a *'lost voice'*.

This echoes how ethnic minority women are only intermittently included in discussions of gendered organisation, the professions and leadership positions (Allen and Lewis, 2016).

Kamenou and Fearfull (2006) highlight how '*with a few exceptions the career experiences of ethnic minority women are not well documented*' (ibid: 157). This is despite the findings from the most recent large-scale research into the role of ethnicity in the work place that revealed only six percent of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) employees will reach senior positions (McGregor-Smith, 2017). On publication of these findings the CIPD (2017b) called for greater commitment from the HR profession to address inequalities in organisations that prevent the full utilisation of all available talent in the labour market. In doing so overlooking the need to address and understand the position and experiences of BME women within its own profession.

CIPD research conducted in 2013 has also revealed how social background appears to affect entry and progression in the HR profession. A quantitative survey exploring social mobility in the profession revealed that HR professionals were twice as likely, as the national average, to have attended an independent school. In addition, seventy-five percent of HR professionals responding to the survey had a degree or postgraduate qualification, which is nearly three times the average within the workplace. The report highlighted how; '*This has considerable implications for social mobility because educational opportunities and achievements are related to family background* (CIPD, 2013: 5). However, the lack of further research from the professional body in relation to the specific impact of social class on the career management experiences of women in the HR profession reveals the continued '*ambivalence as to the location of class*' (Walby et al, 2012: 231) and how it interacts with other social identities, which is a common story in career and organisational studies.

Defining social class is notoriously problematic and the CIPD (2013) have sought to capture this by using family background and access to educational opportunities, as proxies for class. Acker's definition of class as the 'enduring and systematic differences in access to and control over resources for provisioning and survival' (Acker, 2006: 445) is relevant for this thesis exploring the career experiences of women. Provisioning denotes the relationship between paid and unpaid work and the ability to support and arrange care for dependents and other varied activities related to life outside of work. This demonstrates the relevance of Acker's definition to studies of professional women's careers, as often they are balancing both paid and non-paid domestic arrangements (Pringle, 2017).

These discussions highlight how current empirical understandings of women in the HR profession and their career management experiences have tended to avoid issues of ethnicity and class. This is despite the HR profession being lorded, as defenders and promoters of diversity and equality amongst employees in the wider organisation. The aim of this research is to address this gap in our empirical understanding by applying a feminist poststructuralist lens and intersectional approach, which seeks to deconstruct the social categories of gender, ethnicity and class to explore the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession. In applying a poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis in combination with the intersectional lens, which aligns closely to Foucauldian principles of the role of power and knowledge in discourse; how privilege and disadvantage are sustained, resisted, and fluctuating it terms of career outcomes for women in the profession can be revealed. It is through exposing sites of discursive resistance at intersectional localities that the opportunity for transformational change emerges and dominant discourses are challenged through the foregrounding of competing and alternative discourses (Baxter, 2007).

1.3 Research question and objectives

This research aims to analyse the role of discourses in the career management experiences of middle managers in the (HR) profession through a feminist poststructuralist and intercategorical intersectional lens (McCall, 2005). In doing so there is an opportunity to provide new insights into career management strategies and practices within the profession that offer the potential for transformational change in relation to the careers of women in the HR profession. Specifically, this thesis addresses the following research question;

How do dominant professional and gendered discourses within the HR profession shape the career management experiences of female middle managers at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class?

The following research objectives (RO) will be applied in to order to address the overarching research question. The following objectives apply the feminist poststructural and intercategorical intersectional philosophical position, which seeks to expose the role of gendered and dominant discourses in the HR profession at the fluid and multiple intersects of gender, ethnicity and class. This provides the opportunity to expose alternative discourses at these intersectional localities, which provide the context and space for different

understandings and potential solutions for more equitable outcomes in careers in the HR profession. The research also aims to identify how competing discourses position speakers as powerful, powerless or a combination of both in their career management experiences of female, middle managers in the HR profession at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class. As such the specific research objectives of the research are;

RO 1 To explore the role of dominant, commercially orientated HR professional discourses on the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 2 To explore how gendered careerist and motherhood discourses shape the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 3 To examine the role of dominant managing diversity discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 4 To explore the role of ethical and sustainable HR discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

1.4 Contribution of the thesis

This research makes a number of strategic and theoretical contributions in relation to career management theory and practices that seek to address barriers and enablers for the progression of women in HR middle management into more senior positions. Recent CIPD (2017a) career advice for HR professionals looking to advance their careers into HR leadership roles only makes fleeting reference to gender issues and ignores ethnicity and class, as potentially significant in shaping the experiences and opportunities afforded to women in the profession (see CIPD publication 2017 'How to become a HR leader). This is despite their own research (CIPD, 2013), which identified socio-economic group as a potential barrier to progressing within the profession. This research seeks to address this gap and makes a contribution to current career management models by revealing the role of dominant discourses in the careers of middle managers in the profession and by exposing the sites of resistance and counter discourses that emerge from an intersectional approach.

A feminist poststructuralist and intersectional analysis of the career management experiences of women in the HR profession is also required to move away from a focus on white, middle class women's experiences and comparing women's careers in the profession to a normative 'ideal' male career. This is evident from mainstream career management advice for women in the HR profession that encourages women to adopt gendered masculine norms of organisational behaviour such as, 'being less nice and more strategic' and having a male mentor if they want to progress (see Thompson, 2004). A contribution of this research is to highlight professional and career management solutions that are not based on a deficit model of women, whereby they need to act more like men, in order to be promoted into senior positions.

It has also been identified how there has been only a limited application of intersectional modes of inquiry to the large body of career literature and theory (Ryan, 2012). This research supports the development of career management literature that exposes the role that power, knowledge and discourses play, as individuals navigate their career management. Privilege can then be understood from beyond binary categories of advantage and disadvantage. In this respect, through recognising that privilege and disadvantage can be experienced simultaneously, an intersectional analysis avoids the positioning of marginalised groups as 'other' and needing to be 'fixed', as per much mainstream career and diversity literature and practice (Holvino, 2010).

Discourse analysis has become an established method in management and organization studies but has been less prominent in HRM. Mahaddevan and Kilian-Yasin (2016) in calling for more studies that apply discourse analysis, identify that there is a relatively small number of related studies that examine different dominant discourses within the HR profession and how they structure collective reality amongst HR professionals. These include the commercial HR discourse (Francis and Keegan 2006, 2010), the role of unitarist diversity management discourses (Zanoni and Janssens, 2004, Zanoni etal., 2010) and the role of e-HRM discourses in international HRM (Francis et al, 2014). This research seeks to contribute to these debates by applying an intersectional analysis that seeks to understand how professional discourses create privilege, resistance, salience and inequality in the career management experiences of middle managers in the HR profession. As such this research contributes to this growing body of discourse analysis within the HR profession and given the emphasis of reflexivity in the poststructuralist feminism supports call for more constructive

reflexivity to challenge dominant discourses and provide greater space for pluralism in professional discourses (Mahaddevan and Kilian-Yasin, 2016).

The ultimate goal of intersectional research is to challenge inequality and engender change but mainstreaming intersectionality into organisational and occupational policy and practice is not without its challenges (Rodriguez et al, 2016). Despite the growing empirical evidence base from organisational and professional intersectional studies, which highlights the limitations of diversity strategies based on single social categories, the extent to which intersectionality appears in practitioner diversity management literature and practice across the globe is still limited (McBride et al, 2015). Intersectional research also reveals the potential causes of this, as it has shown how diversity policy and HR practice is subject to the power processes and structures it is designed to disrupt (Healy et al, 2011). This research, through exposing the role of hegemonic professional discourses in influencing career management experiences, presents the opportunity for the HR profession to contribute to a non-essentialist reconceptualization of career management and wider professional discourses that acknowledges power (Zanoni and Janssen, 2007).

1.5 Overview of methodology

This thesis contributes to the developing body of empirical work that seeks to operationalise the paradigm of intersectionality and addresses calls for more intersectional inquiry to make practical interventions where inequalities and status quos persists, such as the stubborn nature of vertical segregation in feminised professions. Intersectionality has been described as the perhaps "*the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far*" (McCall, 2005. 1771). This position is as inflammatory to critics of intersectionality, as inspirational to those adopting and embedding this approach in their scholarship. There has been significant theoretical and methodological engagement, critique and positioning on intersectionality amongst feminists across the globe and highlights the importance of clearly defining and justifying your methodological approach and controversies associated with it at the outset of any intersectionality study (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013).

Critics cite the lack of consensus on the methodological approach to identifying and analysing relevant intersectional processes, as a weakness (Davis, 2008). This position is

rejected and methodological debates regarding how to analyse the complex issues in intersectionality should be seen, as evolving and complementary (Acker, 2006). Much productive theorizing and debate concerning frameworks for intersectional research has rightly occurred and there continue to be calls for more empirical application, in order to support the development of clear conceptions for how the process of intersectionality can be analysed (Wright, 2016).

Debates regarding appropriate methodology have largely centred on comparing approaches to intersectional analysis, which give greater attentiveness to individual experiences given their intersecting social identity, versus approaches that explore intersections that can expose systematic dynamics of power. There is a tendency in organisational studies to prioritise individual subjective identity experiences over the systemic process and structures of power, which can impede the transformative impact of intersectional research and there are calls for more research that can expose structural power relations (Rodriquez et al, 2016: 202). This research addresses this call by applying a feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis, which can expose the power and knowledge structures that are sustained through the use of hegemonic or dominant discourses in the career management experiences of women in the middle management positions in the HR profession.

 This intersectional and feminist poststructualist discourse analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with twenty-five women in middle managers roles in the HR profession. In adopting the position that social reality is produced and made real through discourses (Phillips and Hardy, 2002. 3) the main aim is to expose how discourses influence the career management decisions and behaviours of women, particularly in relation to progressing higher in the profession. Within an intersectional lens the research will explore how professional, organisational and other social discourses intersect, compete and are interpreted from the intercategorical position of gender, ethnicity and class.

 In emphasizing the role of language, as a power resource that is linked to gender, class, and ethnic ideologies, discourse analysis has the potential to expose hegemonic and controlling discourses and can serve a transformational function (Anderson, 2006). Drawing on the work of Foucault (1977) poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis seeks to expose subtle and innocuous forms of power that are discursive in nature and are embedded and dispersed through networks of relations (Baxter, 2003, 2007 and 2017). As applied here the discourses

used by middle managers in the HR profession in the context of their career management experiences will be analysed to reveal the sites of privilege, resistance, ambiguity, as well as vulnerability and disadvantage.

The social categories identified as significant to this research problem were gender, ethnicity and class. To avoid the research inadvertently contributing to certain social groups always being depicted as 'other' by not naming or including 'white middle class women' in studies of ethnicity and class (Christensen and Jenson, 2012: 112), the sample includes participants with this background. Participants when approached to take part in the research were told that the research was exploring the role of gender, ethnicity and class on their career management experiences but in the actual interview were always asked to self-define their ethnicity and explore their perceived socio- economic group within a wider discussion of the influence of their background on their career management, to avoid imposing social categorises on them.

A purposeful and snowballing sample was applied from women attending HR networking events. The inclusion criteria required participants to have an Advance Level 7 CIPD qualification to mitigate for differences in educational attainment, which is a commonly cited barrier or enabler to career progression. Secondly, participants needed to be in a middle management position (the definition for a middle management position is provided in the Methodology Chapter). Middle management was selected over mid-career stage due to the problems associated with age related approaches to understanding careers (Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk, 2010). The research problem is particularly focused on exploring career management experiences at the middle management, as per the stubborn nature of vertical segregation in feminised professions (Huppatz, 2015).

A detailed account and justification of the research methodology is explored in the Methodology Chapter of this thesis. However, a more detailed exploration of the role reflexivity played in this research, including the sensitivities associated with a middle-class white researcher undertaking research with ethnically and socially economic diverse female participants is explored here. As part of these discussions consideration will be paid to how the research with a diverse group of participants should be conducted, as diversity research has sometimes overlooked or not considered these issues in significant depth (Kamenou, 2007).

1.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity plays a central role in this thesis, as it is an integral aspect of poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis and intersectional research. One of the key contributions feminist poststructuralism has made to qualitative enquiry is the depth and significance of reflexivity (Baxter, 2003). At the heart of reflexivity in poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis is to explore how your own identity, as researcher, can influence the discursive practices of the participants. It also requires an in-depth evaluation of how discursive practices shape the behaviour and experiences of the researcher, as their own social world and understanding of it is shaped by discursive practices. As part of embedding this reflexivity into practice it is important at the outset of research to articulate how these issues have shaped the thesis (Baxter, 2017). In terms of my identity, as per the poststructuralist grounding of the research it is also important to stress how my identity has been fluid and non-fixed during the process of this research. Key aspects of my identity are reflected upon here to provide context to the reader and to demonstrate how these have shaped the development of the research.

In doing so these discussions also act, as part autobiographical forward in relation to how my interest in this research topic was formed from my experiences of working within the HR profession and in continuing to work *with* the profession in the capacity of a Senior Lecturer in HRM. Previous to my current academic role I worked in a variety of HR positions in the Metropolitan Police Service. It was here that the issues of gendered discursive practices and access to senior positions for different groups and individuals became of interest to me. Baxter (2003) highlights the importance in poststructuralist feminist research for in-depth or ethnographic knowledge of the research setting in order to be significantly immersed in naturally occurring discursive practices. In this respect my experience with, and alongside the profession can support this aim.

However, reflecting on how my academic role could mean that participants change their discursive practices in my presence. This highlights a challenge for feminist researchers, which has been described as the insider and outside continuum (Acker, 2001) whereby in shifting discursive contexts the researcher can be perceived as alongside or in the research community. My identity, as academic in the context of research on careers is important, as when people are discussing their careers and particularly 'professional careers' there are status issues associated with this. Meaning that participant's 'talk' in our interviews, and the

relationship between discursive patterns and actual experiences in the natural setting, could be different. Overcoming this requires conducting interviews in a sensitive manner and being aware of when status issues could be impeding discursive practices.

Herein lies another important issue for a reflexive practitioner. I am embedded in discursive regimes and concepts used throughout this research in relation to careers and the HR profession that have discursive power and meaning which can be applied, resisted or lead to privilege in different ways between myself, as researcher and the participants. To illustrate, 'career management' is a discourse, as is 'to be CIPD qualified'. My embeddedness in the profession requires acknowledgement and reflection on how my experiences of analysing the texts of the participants are shaped by discourses.

Beyond professional aspects of my identity it is also important to highlight the role and fluidity other social categories play in shaping social reality and discursive encounters with the participants in this research. As such it is important to reflect on key facets of my identity that could shape the research in different ways and at different times. I am a white female researcher from a middle-class background and have two children. In being conscious of, and reflecting on how social categories intersect and with other discourses associated with my identity such as being a 'working mother' it is evident how elements of my fluid identity could be used to build rapport with participants, as we have areas in common. The intersects could also work in the reverse fashion and inadvertently contribute to exclusionary treatment of women who feel they need to change their discursive practices or shape discussions of their careers in such a way that impact the authenticity of their accounts.

These considerations become more paramount when conducting research with diverse groups, particularly when the researcher is white and some of the participants are not, as there are inherent and historical power and knowledge structures that prevail in relation to people from different ethnic and class groups, which impacts how they are perceived and inequalities prevail (Kamenou, 2007). The poststructuralist perspective recognises that 'ethnicity' and 'class', as is gender are socially constructed terms. As such women from different ethnicities and social classes are in essence social actors in a society made up for different institutions and structures with regimes of discourses. In adopting this position it is also important to avoid being overly deterministic or essentializing of women with different ethnic background and classes. In this respect whilst women can share some similar

experiences based on their ethnicity and class equally individuals can resist and respond and behave differently within discursive regimes. Agency and resistance is achieved in the context of discursive practices through competing discourses that challenge hegemonic discourses that maintain inequality and stereotypes about different social groups (Baxter, 2003).

The reflexivity required is to recognise that I am shaped and influenced by hegemonic discourses, even when embedded in poststructuralist and intersectional thinking, and whilst there are competing discourses in my understanding of the social world, it is important I do not simply present grand discourses that reinforce victimhood and do no show the full range of experiences and competing discourses. Nuance and personal reflection is required in seeking to understand competing discourses that highlight sites of resistance. In doing so the women in the research are not portrayed as victims, which is a key aim for poststructuralist feminist research (Wodak, 2008). This also meets the goals of intersectional research of revealing how privilege and disadvantaged are not fixed and located within one category of 'women'.

1.7 Chapter Summary

The rise and significance of intersectionality in gender studies has major implications for the professions, which has still not been addressed by mainstream organisational and profession studies (Hearn et al, 2016) and remains under researched in the context of the relevance and applicability of career management models (Ryan, 2012). The intersectional lens of exploring the career management experiences of gender, ethnicity and class from an intercategorical intersectional perspective provides the opportunity to provide new insights into effective career management practices that are conscious of the role of professional discourse in shaping career outcomes. In perceiving 'gender', 'ethnicity' and 'class', as social constructions and highlighting the role that dominant professional discourses and competing discourses that can resist hegemonic talk provides the opportunity for marginalised voices not commonly heard, as per the silenced voices of ethnicity and class amongst women in the HR profession. The aim here is to not create new hegemonic discourses for effective career management for women at the middle management level in the HR profession, as this would be counter to the poststructuralist grounding of the research but rather to highlight alternative

discursive practices that can resist dominant discourse and avoid the presentation of diverse groups in the HR profession from a victim/deficit perspective.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is structured in the following ways: as explored here the first chapter has outlined the main theoretical and strategic contributions of the research and identified the overarching research question and objectives. The second chapter critically examines through a feminist poststructuralist and intersectional the seminal and contemporary literature and debates contributing to our understanding of career management in the HR profession, including how dominant discourses developed to shape career management experiences. The following chapter explores the philosophical underpinnings and compatibility of feminist poststructuralism and intersectionality. The Research Methods chapter provides a detailed account and justification for the research methods employed within the context of the philosophical debates underpinning the two main theoretical constructs of the research. Following this, the findings chapters identify the role of dominant discourses in the career management experiences of the women at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class. The discussion chapter explores the connectivity of these findings to previous literature and the main theoretical and strategic implications of the research. The final chapter draws together the main findings and addresses the limitations to the research and proposes future research directions based on the findings of this thesis. The thesis ends with a final reflexivity note, which summaries the key reflexive learning from undertaking undertaking the research.

CHAPTER 2 Historical and critical debates within gendered, classed and ethnicised professionalisation and career management experiences in the HR profession

2.1 Introduction to the literature review

 The main aim of this research is to explore a range of dominant discourses in the career management experiences of middle managers in the (HR) profession through a feminist poststructuralist and intercategorical intersectional lens (McCall, 2005). This literature review will explore the way in which hegemonic and competing discourses have emerged and become established through processes of professionalisaiton within the HR profession and within dominant models of career management. The first chapter explores historical and critical debates within female careers in the HR profession. This chapter includes exploring the literature based on the HR professionalisation project (expressed in this review, as occurring in two key stages) that has cemented the dominant discourses within the profession as commercially and business case oriented and the subsequent impact this has had on the careers of women in the profession. The gendered context and discourses within the profession and the relationship to ethnic and class experiences and how this has contributed to the current position and status of female HR managers is also examined.

The second literature review chapter explores the role of discourses associated with *new* models of career management. *New* is in italics to highlight how current models of careers are still represented by the shift in thinking about careers that is argued to have taken place in the early 1990's from single organisationally focused careers to those driven by individual values and characterised by multiple and shifting roles inside and outside of one organisations (Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk, 2010). Models of female career management, which are argued to more effectively represent the realities of women's needs and values are then critically considered within this domain. These models and theories will then be considered in the context of female middle management careers, including intersectional research and the complexities associated with this role and position. This chapter will also analyse the contribution feminist poststructuralism has made to understandings of female managerial careers and the role discourse analysis plays in these studies. The second literature review chapter closes by exploring the small but growing body of intersectional literature focused on these issues before identifying the gaps in the literature that the research objectives of this research will address.

2.1 Careers in the HR Profession in context

This section starts by exploring how dominant discourses within the HR profession became established through two keys stages of professionalisation. The first stage reflects the change from personnel to HRM and the second, how the work of Ulrich (1997) drove the development of the HR Business Partner model that prioritised value added HR and the diminishing of the employee advocate (Francis and Keegan, 2006). These issues are considered in the context of HR, as a 'new' managerial profession and the impact on female middle managers careers in HR today, as the profession continues its discursive quest for legitimacy.

2.1.2 The HR professionalisation project

 Over time the status of HR, as a management profession has been a reoccurring discourse amongst HRM academics and practitioners. In common with other nascent managerial occupations, such as marketing and Information Technology, HR has had to compete and strive to enhance its status and power (Wright, 2008). In contrast to the traditional professions, such as medicine and law newer managerial profession are located *within* organisations or businesses. The status then afforded to managerial professions, such as HR depends on the power it can yield within the business and how this is viewed by business leaders. Status can only be gained when they can demonstrate to senior leaders the value-add they can add to the business goals (Armstrong, 1986). Connected to these discussions were processes by which professionalisation worked, particularly in the context of new managerial professions, which can be viewed as a hybrid of organisationally and managerially focused. In this sense HR's professionalisation project can be seen to have adapted to managerialist pressure within organisations at the time, which emphasized a neo-liberalist agenda for greater individualised management practices and performativity. In this sense the new managerial projects were founded on less tangible claims to be a stand-alone profession and more understood in terms of alignment to organisational objectives (Roper and Higgins, 2015). The discourse associated with the value added professionalisation project of HR has important consequences for female careers in middle management positions. Legge (1987) identified how stages of professionalisation and a discourse of enhanced strategic orientation made the position of women in the profession more vulnerable. The legacy of HR's

connectedness to the new managerial professionalisation project is compounded by the historical roots of the profession and feminisation, as the following discussions explore.

2.1.3 Journey from personnel to HRM and professional status and associated discourses

 The socio-historical context of the HR profession is important to understand how dominant discourses became established within the profession, as the HR profession and how it achieves meaning is socially constructed and deconstructed through social relations and associated discourses (Gold and Bratton, 2003). HRM emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1980's during the period of individualistic and enterprise government. With the curtailing of trade union and collective power HRM would become to embed managerialist and unitarist thinking which is still persuasive today.

HRM grew out of personnel management, which had its roots in the welfare officer role. This context has been a source of HRM's legitimacy struggle and has been an important discourse impacting those working in the profession since, as evident in the following quote in the context of the legacy of the reputation of personnel management, its predecessor;

> '…this early identification of personnel management activities with female activities in a patriarchal society, inevitably meant that the function would carry a legacy of being low status and unimportance at least in comparison to central male activities, such as production, finance and so on' (Legge, 1995: 21).

 HRM found it difficult to disassociate itself from the discourse of personnel and lower status. This was particularly problematic in the early stages of professionalisaiton, as HRM academics and practitioners struggled to establish a clear break from personnel in terms of practice and strategic influence. For some, HRM represented a significantly different way of managing people, whilst for others it was simply a name change (Watson, 1999). The context is the nature of inherent problems within the function for managing people. Legge 's (1978) seminal work on personnel management identified three inherent ambiguities that formed a vicious cycle and limited their power and ability to improve the function's effectiveness. Firstly, the ambiguity between personnel management being, a set of activities which are undertaken and a management function. This results in a lack of power in the decision making process in issues relating to people management and a constant state of reactiveness and crisis management. Next, there are no clear success criteria, which again creates a lack of

focus and reactive management. Thirdly, there is a tension between needing to be on the side of the business, which could lead the function to being accused, as weak and non-strategic (Guest and King, 2004: 402-403).

Legge (1978) proposed that in the face of these inherent ambiguities in the vicious cycle, personnel managers demonstrated two strategies to try to establish their professionalism. One was to be a conformist innovator to the organisational financial success criteria and judge their contribution on this alone. Alternatively, personnel managers could become deviant innovators whereby a broader range of interests and outcomes are recognised as success criteria. Guest and King (2004) applied the model again 25 years later during which time HRM had become established, as the dominant function and theoretical approach for managing people and revealed that whilst there was some evidence of a reduction inherent tensions some of the issues remained. HR Directors in the survey expressed almost religious like commitment to the conformist innovator role, whereby the business interests of organisations had become firmly accepted, as the main strategic goals for HRM. The later study revealed that more people management activities had moved to the line and as such HRM professionals aligned almost exclusively to business interest (ibid: 405). Missing from Guest and King's (2004) analysis but not Legge's (1978) was the gendered nature of the HR profession and how these ambiguities and complexities, particularly in relation to how they could be fixed (which Legge was quite sceptical about) needed greater attention.

The discursive tensions identified by Legge (1978) travelled from personnel management to HRM and left a legacy of legitimacy issues for HR professionals. Despite these inherent problems of legitimacy and status and trying to professionalise a function for an activity (people management) which is notoriously messy (Watson, 1987) the professionalisation agenda pushed forward. Culminating in July 2000 when the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Developed (CIPD) gained Royal Chartership and formal status as a profession. HRM achieved a status not on a par with the traditional professions, but newer managerial occupations, such as accounting, through professional accrediting powers (Rothwell and Arnold (2005). However, newly acquired professional status and a proliferation of academic and practitioner interest in establishing the holy grail that could link strategic HRM to enhanced firm performance; the inherent tensions and ambiguities identified by Legge in the late 1970's did not significantly diminish. This lead Bratton and Gold (2003) to highlight how professional recognition and membership group could not change the extent of HRM's

professional power, which was still reliant on the acceptance and behaviours of other. Shifting these mindsets within in the business would prove much more difficult. This lead Bratton and Gold (2003) to proport how professional recognition and growing professional membership size could not change the extent of HRM's organisational power, which was still reliant on the acceptance and behaviours of other.

2.1.4 The 'Ulrichisation' discourse in HRM and second stage of professionalisation

Into this picture emerged what would prove to be the highly influential work of Ulrich (1997, 2005) who claimed to offer a pathway to heaven for HR if they could repent for their previous sins and encouraged HR departments to;

> '... move their HR professionals beyond the roles of the policy police and regulatory watchdog to become partners, players and pioneers in delivering value' (Ulrich, 1997: viii)

In the original 'Ulrich model' there were four key roles that the HR function should undertake, which included the strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert and employee champion or advocate (Ulrich, 1997). It can be argued that Ulrich's proposed new direction for HR departments did not offer anything significantly new in terms of previously well-established debates in relation to improving the status and credibility of HR and the desired role functionality carried out by the HR professionals (see Storey, 1992). Where Ulrich was successful was in seemingly to establish a break between the strategic and transactional aspects of HR, which provided organisations with an opportunity to rationalise HR service delivery. This was achieved through what has commonly became known, as the 'three-legged stool' model for HR delivery (Tamkin et al, 2006) with the creation of HR shared service centres that delivered 'transactional HR' and 'centres of expertise' and strategic HR business partners left in the field. Whilst the extent of adoption (CIPD, 2007 and Younger, Younger and Thompson, 2011) is debated in terms of how HR departments replicated the three-legged stool; there is broad consensus that the Ulrich model has been the dominant approach in organisational understandings of how to structure and organise HR work.

This model of HR delivery has been criticised on a number of levels not least as the original Ulrich model did not establish how the four roles should be enacted (Pritchard, 2009). Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) would later try to rectify this, and what is consistent with the emphasis in the original model, is that HR behaviour and activities should be directed to adding value to the business bottom line. Guest and King (2004) described Ulrich's approach as encouraging conformist innovation, so fundamentally did little to challenge the realities of the inherent status and legitimacy issues within the profession. This has also been compounded by the emphasis on the separation of transactional and strategic HRM and whilst Ulrich had suggested the original roles were not mutually exclusive, the impact has been an emphasis in trying to demarcate roles in the profession, as 'strategic' and those that 'need doing'. This created the potential for further tension within the profession because the realities of any management function and level of seniority will involve some 'doing'. The imposition of the model into a climate of unresolved tensions from the legacy of personnel management meant old ambiguities remained for practitioners (Caldwell, 2004).

One ambiguity that was resolved by the implementation of the Ulrich model was the necessity for HR practitioners to champion both the business and employees. The employee champion role essentially disappeared in the implementation of new structural models for HR delivery. The emphasis on structural changes around the role of 'business partner' meant the space for discourses of 'employee champion' and a focus on broader stakeholders was seriously restricted, particularly in the context of HR professionals being able to demonstrate balance between the needs of employees and the organisation (Francis and Keegan, 2006). This dominant textscape of HRM meant that HR work was largely reframed, as a unitarist business issue. The history of personnel management, and as such HRM is intertwined with the development of 'responsible business' and protecting the interests of employees, as well as employers (Parkes at al, 2017: 84). The dominant textscape of adding value to the business silences pluralist understandings of HRM grounded in ethical or 'soft' HRM approaches. Where softer approaches to HRM have sought greater balance between the needs of people and the commercial ambitions of the organisation, through discourses of talent development, these are still most commonly discursively practiced with '*using resources efficiently*' (Lewis and Heckman, 2006). The commercial and individualised discourses associated with talent and career development in the HR profession are infused with a neo-liberalist economic discourses including *'doing more with less'* that has meant high levels of restructuring,

reorganising and job cuts, which HR are often at the fore-front of delivering on behalf of the business (Dundon and Rafferty, 2018).

2.1.5 Critical evaluation of the impact of the Ulrichisation on HR careers

A number of studies have explored implications for HR careers, as a consequence of the wide-spread adoption of the Ulrich inspired Business Partner and Shared Service centre model of HR operational delivery. A theme that emerges in this literature is the discourse of gaining 'generalist' HR experience, in order to develop an effective HR career and gain promotions. The term HR generalist is used to reflect a non-specialist HR practitioner and has varied experience across HR disciplines and different organisations (Personnel Today, 2015). Cooke (2006) in a study exploring the adoption of the HR Shared service model indicated that it was likely to have negative implications for HR careers due to greater isolation from the business and lack of opportunities to expand generalist HR experience. A CIPD (2006) report suggested that shared service centre roles had resulted in deskilling at entry level HR roles and the level of seniority and pay was reduced. Deskilling of entry level jobs could make the potential for developing generalist experience more difficult. Tamkin et al's (2006) research suggested that for going into more senior level roles specialising in one area of HR through the centre's of expertise could be problematic due to the lack of generalist experience that would be required for more senior roles.

Revealingly, and in a challenge to the professionalisation agenda, other studies have identified how access to senior HR roles does not require specific HR experience. Gennard and King's (2000) study of 'getting to the top in HR' revealed that often HR directors are parachuted in from different functions. In addition, moving between areas of HR delivery was important, but so to was gaining experience outside of the HR function, in what the authors term HR directors zig zagging to the top. In a similar vein Wright (2008) identified what he called the limits of professionalisation and revealed how the creation of the business partner role with an emphasis on more generic 'internal consultancy skills' was reducing the demarcation around senior HR roles and as such had reduced entry barriers to the profession, which require specific HR knowledge. These research findings reveal, again how the inherent tensions in HR delivery have not been resolved by the professionalisation agenda and new service delivery models.

The way in which the profession has been discursively dogged by credibility (Legge, 1995) since the identification of the vicious circles has meant an emphasis in the professionalisation agenda of trying to secure more HR Directorships on Boards. In doing so there was the belief that HR would have a seat at the table and be driving the people management agenda strategically and overcoming one the inherent tensions of the professions. Caldwell (2010) described this, as a search for 'strategic influence and symbolic capital', which would also make the demarcation from personnel management greater. This was despite a recognition by the practitioners surveyed that in practice strategy often did not take place at this level but the Directorship was desirable for symbolic capital.

The discursive quest for a 'seat at the table' has become an established professional discourse within HRM to signify attempts to be taken more seriously and to operate at a strategic par with other functions of the business. Francis and Keegan (2010) highlighted how;

> 'Discourse producers including for example academics and other actors in educational institutions, invoked resources to influence the way language constructs particular types of HR-reality and govern the way HR-issues are talked about, understood and experienced' (ibid: 873).

The influence of the Ulrich model combined with the wider professionalisation agenda and qualifications shape the reality of practitioner experiences. The dominant discourse in the mainstream HRM writing is framed, as a business issue. As explored above the dominance of the discourse can silence alternative discourse such as softer models of HRM. Hallier and Summers (2011) in a study of professional identity construction among students of HRM (who were also gaining HR work experience) revealed how exposure to HR professional experience meant assimilation to the mainstream value-added discourse happened quickly, even when they had been exposed to critical accounts during their studies, emphasising again the persuasiveness of the business discourses. Francis and Keegan (2010) suggest that the business value add textscape in HRM can swamp other traditional concerns of the HR function, which impacts employee well-being and HR's responsibility in securing it.

Despite the dominance in mainstream HRM of managerialist agendas achieved through discourse it does not mean that other voices and critical perspectives disappear. As per the

poststructuralist tradition there will always be multiple discourses and regimes of truth competing with one another in a discursive space (Foucault, 1972). Critical HRM and ethical HRM perspectives have provided consistent challenge to the mainstream HRM. In doing so, the emphasis is exposing how the managerialist and positivist focus lacks reflexivity and sufficient concern for the impact on the employees. In challenging the mainstream perspective these approaches have sought to expose structures of domination and question taken for granted assumptions (Greenwood and Freeman, 2012), as Caldwell does above in relation to the rhetoric and reality of the profession gaining more strategic influence by holding Directorships.

Another taken for granted discourse in mainstream HRM is it is gender, ethnicity and class neutral. The unitarist focus, which assumes organisational and employer interests are aligned, a focus on commitment and flexibility and emphasising the development of core competencies and the full deployment of employees, implies a positive outcome for 'all' employees. Kamenou and Fearfull (2006) suggest that whilst the limits to the equality rhetoric in HRM has been challenged from a gender perspective ethnicity has been a 'lost voice'. Ethnicity, class and other social categories are also absent from studies exploring the impact of feminisation on the careers of women in the HR profession. The following discussion explores the existing body of research that examined the nature of feminisation on female careers in the HR profession and considers the implications of the silenced intersectional voices of gender, ethnicity and class.

2.1.6 Female professional careers in HRM missing voices

Early research exploring the professional experiences of women in the HR profession focused on issues of feminisation and how when the numbers of women increased this would coincide with periods of reduced status for the profession. It was argued that men would avoid the profession when it was perceived as lower status (Legge, 1987). This trend is argued to have stabilised in Western Europe between 1995-2004 and increased feminisation is associated with the growing strategic significance of the HR profession (Reichel, Brandl and Mayrhofer, 2010). The same study reveals that despite witnessing a significant period of feminisation, men were still more likely to occupy more HR director level posts, reflecting the way in which men benefit from their minority status in feminised professions. The authors purport that the numbers of women in HR represents attempts by organisations to

achieve demands for enhanced diversity at the top of organisations without having to let go of traditional demarcations between female and male work.

Other macro analyses of the impact of feminisation reveal that the status and functional responsibilities of female HR Directors varies nationally in Western Europe. Brandl et al (2008) found the level to which female HR professionals could achieve strategic integration was impacted positively depending on countries with strong welfare policies in place for supporting women in the workplace; such as Sweden, Finland and France. The extent of strategic integration was more problematic in countries with weaker enabling welfare support such as the USA, UK and Switzerland. In this respect macro-economic and labour market policies appear to influence the position and status of women in the profession. Micro level analyses of careers in the HR profession have tended to focus on the different career management outcomes between men and women and barriers and enablers that they may experience.

An example of this is the early study of Gooch (1994), which revealed that men and women had different expectations in relation to the level within the profession that they would reach with female respondents saying they expected to reach middle management but not higher because of concerns for balance home life and work. Ackah and Heaton (2003) sought to explore if men and women followed different career paths within the HR profession even when they had the same qualifications. These early research findings suggest that men benefit from their minority status gaining more internal promotions. This was primarily articulated in the research findings, as men being more confident than women, as the latter were more likely to identify a lack of confidence, as the main career barrier. Men and women in this research both cited a lack of development opportunities within the HR profession, as a negative influence on their career. More women also perceived a CIPD HR qualification as being beneficial to their career compared to men. These finding support other research that revealed women value CPD and its contribution to their career more than men (Rothwell and Arnold, 2005).

Women occupying what could be considered less strategic roles in HR (and more caring roles) that reproduce traditional gendered stereotypes has been offered, as a reason for less women progressing to the top of the organisation. Simpson and Lenior (2003) in a study of USA and UK HR professionals identified that HR professionals are occupied in service-

oriented roles, such as training and development and male HR professionals are often found in conflict resolution domains. These findings were replicated in small scale studies in the UK where women congregated in development roles that are often perceived as less strategic.

The research picture internationally emerges that women's career in HRM are characterised by lower status, pay and promotion compared to men and are influenced by sex-typed stereotypical views of the men and women's work and the strategic perception or contribution of their work. Broader institutional arrangements can compensate to a certain degree, the extent to which women can expect to achieve 'strategic' status, but even in supportive welfare countries men still benefits from their minority status. Simpson and Lenior (2003) also suggests that women carry a greater burden in the context of emotional labour compared to men in that they become dominated in areas of HR work, which requires emotional suppressions whilst also simulating positive emotions, such as enthusiasm. Emotional labour has been shown to impact negatively on experiences of work stress, job satisfaction and feelings of authenticity at work.

These above discussions also reveal the relatively limited body of empirical research that has been conducted to explore the experiences of men and women in the HR profession. Much of this work has also been conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which supports the aims of this project to revisit and understand the current impact of gender issues within the HR profession and the implications for female careers. What is also evidently missing from existing studies of the career experiences of women in the HR profession is an intersectional lens. There is limited consideration of social categories beyond gender when considering the implications for HR careers. In more recent years the CIPD (2013) explored the impact of social mobility on the careers of women within the HR profession but did not account for how this is mediated by ethnicity or other social categories. The research revealed that people who had attended a Russell Group university compared to Post-1992 institution had higher potential salary expectations in the HR profession. Whilst current salary is the strongest predictor of potential salary, those who have attended the more prestigious 'Russell group' universities have higher potential salary expectations than those who have attended less prestigious, post-1992 universities. People from higher socio-economic groups are more highly represented at Russell group universities, so peer norms about salary expectations may be higher. There was also a higher than the average percentage of people having attending private education accessing HR roles and seventy- five percent of respondents had degree or

postgraduate qualification. The latter could could account for the expectation for a postgraduate CIPD qualification for many HR roles in the UK. The findings, whilst not conclusive or intersectional in context, do suggest that social economic class plays a role in salary expectations and access to the profession.

The survey also revealed that ninety-two percent of the participants believed that HR should play an important role advancing social mobility by ensuring people had the chance to progress, irrespective of their social background. Gender, ethnicity and class are considered the main organising principles of the labour market, influencing patterns of employment and occupational status and are considered major sources of employment discrimination and disadvantage (Kriton and Green, 2016: 8). The social mobility ambitions of the HR professional body whilst reassuring, poses questions concerning the extent to which these issues particularly through an intersectional lens, need to be examined within their own profession. The opportunity to consider social mobility in the context of ethnicity and gender again raises questions for lost voices in the profession and the persuasiveness of mainstream HRMs neutrality on these issues.

2.1.7 Summary and the current picture of female careers in the HR profession

This section has explored the way in which the professionalisation project in HRM has impacted the career experiences and status of women in the profession through the establishment of dominant strategic discourses. As explored, there is only a relatively small body of work that has specifically focused on the career experiences and outcomes for women in HR. This perhaps correlates with the legitimacy and status issues of the profession and the individualistic and unitarist nature of mainstream HRM. However, a focus on the internal career management conditions within the HR profession are important, as a recent large-scale survey of CIPD (2018c) members revealed some worrying trends in relation to reduced opportunities for training. In addition, forty-four percent of participants said that work can be detrimental to their mental health and thirty-eight percent to their physical health (CIPD, 2018c). These issues and conditions could have a significant impact on social mobility within the profession, particularly in the context of different gender, ethnicity and class localities.

Understanding the conditions for enhanced career management opportunities by improving well-being and development opportunities within the profession are also important in the context of increasing levels of feminisation. Large scale survey data now suggests that more than 80% of the profession is female and women are actively choosing to work in HR rather than falling into the profession (Personnel Today, 2017). There have been some campaigns by the UK professional body to increase the attractiveness of the profession to more men. The frontpage cover of the People Management in September 2017 asked 'Does HR have a problem with Men? The title perhaps could have asked 'Does HR have a problem with gender?', as the article reflected the stereotypical ways in which the caring aspects of HR work has been inflated as 'feminine' and thus attracting more women to the profession. It is common practice in HR practitioner publications and blog posts to conflate HR's feminisation as a 'problem' which needs to be fixed by a focus on metrics and the analytical aspects of the role, further compounding gender stereotypes rather than reducing them.

As explored in the introduction chapter of this thesis and above despite the high levels feminisation men still significantly occupy proportionally higher senior management roles. Men are said to still benefit from a glass escalator in feminised professions (Woodhams, Lupton and Cowling, 2014), which sees them also disproportionally occupying more senior positions in social care, nursing and primary school teaching. There is a small but growing body of literature that has looked at the causes of this escalator effect with two main themes emerging by way of explanation. Firstly, that men take their gender privilege and power into the feminised environment and the second relational theme, is the way in which masculinity is threatened by crossing the gendered work division and, as such strategically manoeuvre into positions to reaffirm masculine identity (Lupton, 2006). The theories highlight the gendered nature of feminised professions and but also how femininities and masculinities can be performed. The impact of doing and undoing gender (Baxter 1990 and 2004) will be explored later in this literature review and the contribution of feminist poststructuralism's to understanding the experiences of female careers.

It is argued that this research exploring how the discourses in the HR profession shape the career experiences of female middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class is significant, due to the silenced experiences of women in the profession from an intersectional lens. Despite the extensive academic and practitioner literature on the topic of HRM the voices and experiences of the increasing female profession are very rarely heard, let alone

from the intersectional locality of gender, ethnicity and class. This reflects the way in which management, HRM and managing diversity has been sought to be presented, as gender, ethnicity and class neutral and how inherent socio-historical and economic structures have silenced these single and intersectional subject positions. The intersectional locality of gender, ethnicity and class provides the opportunity for new insights into how discourses and discursive practices shape the career management experiences of the women in supporting or constraining opportunities.

CHAPTER 3 'New' career management discourse and the impact on female managers careers through the feminist poststructuralist and intersectional lens

This chapter explores the discursive changes that are said to have taken place to the nature of careers since the late 1980's; so whilst not technically 'new' they represent a shift in emphasis onto the individual to manage their careers, away from the responsibility of organisation. The new career management discourse emerged in parallel to mainstream HRM in the same political and economic environment that privileged managerialist action and a decline in trade union power. In common with the emergence of HRM was the individualistic and unitarist environment and an emphasis on flexible models of working that provide new career opportunities and choices for employees. At first glance the flexibility and choice appear better suited to women then 'traditional' models of career management that were driven by organisations. However, as the following discussions reveal, there is a 'dark side' to models of new career management, including the crowding out of ethnicity and class considerations (Baruch and Vardi, 2016). This section will critically explore contemporary approaches to career management, including models that seek to more effectively reflect female career experiences over their life time. These models and concepts are then critically explored in the relevance and applicability to female middle management careers.

In order to support the overarching aims and objectives of the research, this chapter explores the way in which poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality have contributed to our empirical knowledge and understanding of female middle management and professional careers. The position adopted in this thesis is that poststructuralism and intersectionality are compatible theoretical concepts that can be brought together, not least when intersectional feminism is understood, in poststructuralist terms, as a discourse. In approaching intersectionality in this way, it can be grounded in poststructuralist ontology and maintains the view of self-subjectivity, as an effect of discourse and power (Mckibbin, Duncan and Hamilton, 2015). In addition, recognising the plethora of ways intersectionality is described and applied. This is not viewed as a weakness of the theory but rather solidifies its relationship with feminist poststructuralism, which supports the view that theories should be ambiguous, paradoxical and incomplete (Davis, 2008). The ontological and epistemological debates associated with bringing poststructuralism and intersectionality together into the same research design are explored in more depth in the Methodology Chapter. The aim of this chapter is to first critically examine the contribution of poststructuralist feminism

scholarship to the topic of female middle management careers, followed by an exploration of research that has used a joint lens of feminist poststructuralism and intersectionality to explore issues of female career management. This chapter concludes by drawing together the gaps in the literature and a discussion of how they are addressed by the research objectives of this research.

3.1 Discourses of 'new' careers – unbounded and value free?

 Changes to global labour markets, deregulation and enterprise cultures are said to have given rise to boundaryless and protean careers (Tams and Arthur, 2011). Originating from the thinking of Arthur and Rousseau (1996) boundaryless careers can represent both psychological and physical boundary organisational crossing. The nature of flexible labour markets means that individuals must adopt a self-driven approach to managing their own career, which includes developing career goals, networks and regularly updating their expertise (Briscoe and Hall, 2006). The discourse suggests due to the reliance on stable employment becoming problematic, employees need to develop their employability and enterprise skills (McCabe, 2009). It is argued that accompanying social changes taking place, mean that individuals are more empowered to craft their careers based on their own values outside of the confines of an organisation (Tams and Arthur, 2011)

 Developing on the thinking of the boundaryless career, Briscoe and Hall (2006) added a further two additional dimensions which would become to be known as the protean career. Values-driven and self-directed discourses entered the career management textscape. Protean careers are framed around an individual's drive to shape, repackage and hone their skills and abilities, to maximise their employability in an ever-competitive labour market (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009). The emphasis is placed on the individual in terms of career success and the degree to which they can engage in self-directed and values driven career orientations (Briscoe and Hall, 2006) rather than a reliance on the organisation to provide career management.

  Given the growth in emphasis on personal values, research has tried to establish how and what values drive careers. These tend to focus on altruistic, good citizenship or doing things for others and work that contributes to the wider society and can also deliver work life balance for the individual. Hall (1996) indicates that a feature of protean careers is that people are 'called' to work that is 'making the world a better place. This has led to a growth

and renewed interest in careers, as a calling (Duffy and Dik, 2013). The precise definition of 'a calling' is of course problematic and highlights the broader criticism applied to the career management discipline that career terminology is often more conceptual and not grounded in a specific theoretical position (Baruch, Szucs and Gunz, 2014). Career authors have attempted to operationalise a calling in different ways via labelling it an orientation or mind-set grounded as a psychological construct, rather than a precise theory of career management. The emphasis becomes on self-efficacy and how pursuit of a sense of a calling impacts commitment to their current and future careers (Duffy and Dik, 2013).

However, the renewed interest in 'career callings' exposes some of the inherent tensions in the career literature; specifically the issues of evaluative ability and the discursive power of taken for granted discourses that become valued laden and linked to socio-economic conditions and constraints. In what Baruch, Szucs and Gunz (2014) described as the rise and rise of concepts, the plethora of careers terminology adds to career management being perceived as a descriptive fields. Despite this, the boundaryless and protean models claim to 'frame the thinking of academics and career practitioners' as the dominant form of career management (Briscoe and Hall, 2006: 5). Social capital becomes an integral part to managing effective boundaryless careers. In this respect transcending boundaries within and outside of organisations relies on comprehensive internal and external networks. As such the growth of the boundaryless career has driven research and practitioner interest in how social capital can be developed (Akkermans and Kubusch, 2017).

3.1. 2 Social capital – accessing networks and social resources for career gains

Social capital within the new career management domain is conceptualised in terms of access to networking (formal and informal) and social resources (inside and outside the organisations). Both are perceived to have an important impact on career success due to the enhanced opportunities for access to information, access to sources and career sponsorship (Seibert, Kraimer and Liden, 2001). In the boundaryless textscape networking becomes essential at every stage of an individual's career for relationship building that can support with finding potential sponsors, avoids unemployment threat and can provide support for job searching (Hatala and Yamkovenko, 2016). As such the role of social ties on career decisions and access to opportunities are perceived, as essential to career success. The role of social capital is one of the most researched topics in career management (Akkermans and Kubusch, 2017), as it is perceived so influential to career success (Burt, 1992, Ibarra, 1992, Higgins,

2001). In boundaryless careers social capital effects the capacity to move roles, as larger networks seemed to influence the likelihood of moving and the confidence to do so. In this sense larger social networks are argued to provide positive psychological support required to move roles (Higgins, 2001).

  In a study of social capital gains within the HR profession Gubbins and Garavan (2016) revealed that building social capital within the profession was problematic due to their dual servicing role to managers and employees. Responding to the competing needs within the business made relationships and forming strong networks more difficult. This is problematic as the positive career management outcomes from social capital gains are said to come from contacts outside of the profession in more senior roles. This is due, in part, to the perception of influential information and resources that can be gained from individuals in those roles. The study revealed only limited career benefits would be gained for networks with other professionals outside of HR in a similar role. Relationship building within the profession was argued to impact on the career sponsorship and in-role benefits, such as supporting the work they were currently doing. These findings challenge some of the hegemonic guidance in mainstream career management literature that promotes the view that extensive networking is required for career success. The ability to develop social capital is contingent on a range of factors not least the professional group to which you belong.

  Networking outcomes have also been shown to have different outcomes for men and women and at different stages of careers (Ajrouch, Blandon and Antonucci, 2005). Networking behaviours such as taking on high visibility projects, social functions and joining professional associations are all consider important within the domain of new careers. However, certain networking activities such as, attending social functions cannot easily be demonstrated to have an impact of career outcomes due to problems of definition in measurement (Forret and Doughery, 2001). Forret and Doughery (2004) looked at a range of networking behaviours to build social capital and found that internal visibility and engaging in professional activities had the most positive impact on social capital and career outcomes. However, there appeared to be a gender bias towards men in relation to how their professional activities were valued more highly in organisations and by employers. The authors indicate there seems to be an imbalance in mainstream career advice for 'networking' externally, when building more visibility internally provides more career gains. This research exposes that large networks

outside of the organisation, with only superficial depth of contact, are unlikely to bring significant career gains in many types of managerial careers (ibid: 420).

The issues identified in mainstream literature and guidance in career management highlights how structural inequalities that exist in relation to careers and the labour market can be masked by sometime superficial interventions, such as 'networking'. These interventions do not address the inherent structural inequalities that exist in relation to which groups have ease of access to the necessary resources and information required to drive a successful career. There is also concern that superficial networking behaviours can deplete the strength of more established relationships and an emphasis on building more impactful relationships within the business (Forret and Doughery, 2004).

3.1. 3 The 'darkside' of careers - critiquing positive discourses of career management experiences

Reflecting the discussions above there are calls for a more critical stance when exploring the nature of careers. Contemporary models of careers are criticised for being overly positive in portraying the nature and the outcomes of careers. The literature tends to focus on positive outcomes rather than negative career experiences. Avoidance of negative career experiences minimises the opportunity to explore and provide greater acceptably of career failure or challenges, which can be an equally valuable learning experience as career success (Baruch and Vardi, 2016).

Another critique of the new models of career management are that they down play the degree to which the organisational career still exists (Clarke, 2012). The alternative reality is that traditional and organisational career discourses actually entwine and coexist with the new career discourses that emphasise individuality (McCabe, 2009: 1575). The danger in overstating the demise of the organisational career is it could be considered to be letting organisations off the hock in terms of providing sufficient development opportunities for employees within organisations. Clarke (2012) suggests that a more effective way at looking at organisational careers is to view them has having evolved, in the context of different value positions of employees and employers, and that they are still highly relevant to strategies of people management in organisations today.

This position was supported by McCade (2009) who explored the nature of the 'enterprise career' discourse on employees in the banking sector. The traditional career discourse of predictability and employment security, was argued to be replaced with one of empowered autonomous individuals, free to choose an entrepreneurial path (ibid: 1575). However, in reality the latter discourse was not fully formed and as such became heavily inscribed with the traditional career management. In doing so, employees were placed in powerful and powerless positions in terms of benefiting and being disadvantaged from the different approaches, as ultimately both reproduce inequalities through the retention of power with dominant groups.

The above study calls for a more 'honest' approach to studying careers that can illuminate opportunities and threats from engagement with a variety of career management discourses. In adopting the 'darkside' or careers (Baruch and Vardi, 2016: 357) this would also help to explore who and how individuals can access, what are considered privileged new careers and ways of working. The following discussions explores the contribution 'female models' of career management have made to this discursive space. These models start from the position that the traditional career model has been the standard by which female careers. The masculinised nature of traditional careers, impacts female career experiences but as the following discussion reveals, female models of careers have subsequently come under the spotlight for only privileging certain groups of women and their career experiences.

3.1.4 Discourses of gendered and 'new' career management models

Despite the perceived dominance of the protean and boundaryless career, women are still judged against a 'normal' linear career (Sabelis and Schilling, 2013). Most structures and cultures within the workplace are based on the hegemonic view of the ideal worker, which is built on the image of a worker who is gender neutral and free of domestic responsibilities and obligations (Acker, 1990). It serves to differentiate women from men on traditional assumptions about domesticity arrangements and who undertakes paid and unpaid work (Acker, 2012: 218). Research demonstrates that often women do no benefit in the same way as men from the investments that they make in their careers and the human capital that they gain over a life time. In every OECD country more women attend Higher Education and in work they take up more on the job training and development but their career paths remain flatter and career benefits in terms of pay and bonus' remain on average less then men's

(Schuller, 2017). The persuasiveness of the ideal worker discourse and normative linear career model can act as barrier to women in terms of developing their career, particularly at more senior levels (Maher, 2013).

Boundaryless and protean models of career management have been argued to present women with greater opportunities, as they more effectively represent their career experiences inside and outside of paid work. In practice, as explored above the realities of boundaryless career adoption being a free-choice on the part of the individuals, has not fully materialised and certainly not for all groups. The over emphasis on individual agency is also problematic and the cultural, economic and other contextual factors impacting female careers, needs greater consideration (La Pointe, 2013). The research picture suggests that men will tend to follow a traditional career path and women will have periods inside and outside full-time work, as a result of domestic arrangements and traditional gender roles. In terms of career success men still obtain objective success measures such as pay and promotion and women seek greater psychological mobility and subjective success, which represents being able to balance home and life more effectively. The inherent nature of traditional gender roles is argued to sustain these conditions (Enache et al., 2011)

Studies of women working part-time in managerial roles reveal the powerful gendered discourses at play that impact women's decision making in relation to work. Durbin and Tomlinson (2014) highlight the proportionally small number of women working in part-time management jobs and how difficult it can be progress managerial careers from a part-time position. When women are able to progress into managerial roles that are part-time the pay, conditions and promotions can be expected to be reduced, as the dominant discourse is; 'they are lucky to be working part-time'. Within the guise of new models of career management working part-time is a value driven choice based on a desire to balance work and home life and thus seen as voluntary. Women adopting part-time working in a professional or managerial role can expect their career progress to be limited. The power of these discourses is evident in how women judge other women in more senior roles, as potential mentor or role models. Women that are full-time and are not perceived to be engaged in active parenting are judged more harshly by other women (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2014).

Facing poorer conditions for part-time working and the glass ceiling effect it has been argued that an 'opt-out revolution' has occurred, which has seen 'talented' women leave

organisations in large numbers, as they are no longer inspired to reach the most senior positions in organisations. Mainiero and Suvillan (2006) suggest there has been a generational shift in attitudes towards the traditional career model amongst women and proposed the kaleidoscope career, as more effectively reflecting women's need to reconcile career choices and home-based commitments, during different times in their life cycle. By using the kaleidoscope metaphor this implies women are able to commit to career and home in shifting and changing patterns, and there is not a one size fits all. Women also shape their career in the context of the different relationships and commitments in their lives and rotate and alternate their decisions and behaviours in the context of these other 'pieces' in the kaleidoscope. Women then form career decisions based on the ability to achieve authenticity (they can still be themselves at work); if balance is achieved between work and home and if they can expect sufficient challenge in their work. Women's careers have been shown to be more susceptible to the influence of family relations and career choices being shaped by their partners work (Beauregard, 2007). However, individual choices need to be understood in the broader context of the societal and organisational structures, policies and culture that do not support female careers. In this sense exploring what are the factors limiting choice is equally important, as a focus on women's choices (Cabrera, 2009).

As such, the kaleidoscope model has come into criticism in the same way, as the boundaryless and protean model for the way it seems to advocate and assume free choice and that the main barrier to female careers will be family commitments (La Pointe, 2013). There are no attempts to explore the structural inequalities that curtail and constrain the choices of women in their career and labour market experiences. It poses the questions, which women are free to choose and how do other social categories intersect with gender to impact career decisions?

Sabelis and Schilling (2013) sought to address this limitation by proposing a model that reflects the rhythmicity in careers and to look at women's careers more, as a journey rather than as series of stages. The focus on stages reinforces gender, ethnicity, class and age hegemonic norms of expected behaviours at particular times. Women are then compared against these norms in terms of their decisions at the time. To move away from stereotypes about expected career behaviours and choices, a view of careers as a whole life cycle is proffered. Sabelis and Schilling (2013) use the metaphor of frayed career to reflect more complex, unpredictable and temporal connotations of careers. Although it is acknowledged

that the word 'frayed' could be interpreted, as reflecting careers in more piecemeal rather than the rhythmical ways it is intended.

The frayed language could be argued to reflect more effectively marginalised voices that are often missing from mainstream presentations of careers and changes the discourse that only female careers are disrupted, as the model seeks to encompass men's careers. The emphasis is in highlighting resilience and resistance rather than applying value judgements to periods inside and out of work. As such the model is argued to have a broader reach beyond the previous models that were heavily based on Western connotations of work and family life (Sabelis and Schilling, 2013).

Sang, Al-Dajani, Ozbiligin (2013) applied the model through the intersectional lens to explore the career experiences of migrant female professors in UK Higher Education. The use of the frayed path approach did prove useful in locating niches of strength and opportunities in their experiences and illuminated their resilience through motivation and fighting spirit. An intersectional approach exploring the intersect of female, migrant professors revealed how counterintuitively, from potentially cumulative marginalised positions they were able to mobilise resources to succeed in their careers. This was helped by the support that they already had in the UK when they arrived and the use of entrepreneurial skills. Their studied revealed how women in intersectional localities who could be perceived, as marginalised draw on and mobilise supportive career resources.

Exploring the impact of new models of career management on female careers reveals some their shortfalls. Despite mainstream career theorists arguing that the boundaryless and protean career models now dominate academic thinking, the models still have some way to go to change thinking in practice away from linear models of careers. The experiences of female managers working part-time reveals the negative consequences of the dominant discourse of careers, still being centred on the ideal 'full-time' worker. Female models of careers, such as the kaleidoscope career model could be accused of in some way reinforcing the way in which women are judged in the context of their careers, which includes an assumption of opting out and being less committed. In addition, new model of career management still has a middle class, white norm attached to them, which is something Sabelis and Schilling (2013) try to address in the frayed career concept. What is evident in the career management literature is that careers operate within boarder social and culture

structures, where inherent inequalities reside. In seeking to understand the experiences of women and men in their careers it is essential to account for the wider socio-historical and economic conditions that are shaping their decisions and 'choices'. The following section explores in more depth gender ethnicity and class considerations and implications that shape career management experiences at the middle management level.

3.1.5 Gender, ethnicity and class middle management careers

 Female models of careers have been criticised for largely ignoring ethnicity and class. In common with traditional and contemporary models of careers they are rarely theorised in relation to ethnicity (Kirton, 2009: 14). As a consequence, what is missing is a consideration for how the power differentials and the discriminatory context can produce differential career outcomes. Acker (2012) in revisiting of the role of the gendering processes in organisational hierarchies suggests;

> 'Racial definitions, exclusions and inclusions, are created in the same organizing processes that also create and recreate gender inclusions and exclusions, resulting in a much more complicated picture of differences and inequities. For example, hiring practices might be based on assumptions about racial identities as well as gender identities. Interactions at work may be shaped by racial stereotyping as well as gender and class stereotyping' (Acker, 2012: 218).

This quote highlights the discursive relational nature of careers and career outcomes and that gender, ethnicity and class are interwoven into the career experiences. In navigating managerial and professional careers there becomes expected ways of behaving that are immersed in the ideal worker. In this respect, as women have entered middle management in nearly equal numbers to men, expectations around how they perform femininities and masculinities become complicated, particularly through an intersectional lens. Women are expected to show the careerist attitudes of the ideal worker, whilst at the same time displaying acceptable respectable femininity behaviours. Mavin and Grandy (2016) identify a respectable business femininity discourse that female managers need to conform to. Grounded in the respectable femininity literature, which has been historically associated with gender, ethnicity and class and created a set of expected ways of behaving originating from the 19th and 20th century and experiences of women in India and Pakistan (Radhakrishnan, 2009). Mostly originating from the experience of Hindu and Muslim women, the discourse

and historical locality creates expectations of female behaviours whereby respectable women will dress modestly, managing their emotions and earn their respectability through modest appearance and conduct. Whilst the standards are applied to all women, the presence of religious dress symbols can intensify the expectations of respectability and modesty, reinforces discourses of difference and disadvantage (Riza Arifeen and Gatrell, 2013). Whist religion was not specifically within the remit of this thesis, expectations in relation to standards of behaviour and modesty are significant, not least due to the feminisation and new professional status of the HR profession, as the following discussions explore.

In the business context respectable business femininity manifests, as a discursive struggle for female professionals and managers to balance being a respectable leader and a women, in order to be viewed as credible (Mavin and Grandy, 2016). Inherently gendered, ethnicised and classed; respectable business femininity also has a close association with the feminised professions. The historical development of the new semi-professions or quasi managerial professions such as HRM, reveals that women who dominated these professions, needed to show they are a 'good woman' and a 'successful careerist' (Murzio and Tomlinson, 2012). The good careerist or the ideal worker (Acker, 1990) is inherently masculine, as assumes working practices of one who is totally committed and available for their work. Based on gendered assumptions, which originate from the separation of private and public spaces with the former being the domain of men.

This has significant implications on the way in which professional women are expected to present, in order to fit into dominant elite cultures if they can expect to achieve career gains. In studies of professional's services firms, professional identifies are gendered due to stereotypically accepted masculine and feminine cultural and social norms. These govern the way women have to assimilate into expected norms of presenting and behaving. The body then becomes a vehicle for conforming or resisting gendered norms (Haynes, 2008 and 2012). Kamenou and Fearfull (2006: 169) revealed similar findings in that even though many Western organisations do not have specific dress codes there is an unspoken recognition and understanding of the norm and acceptable standard of personal presentation. Individuals then need to assimilate into that culture to achieve career gains and advancements.

Cultural expectations in relation to diverse groups expecting to fit into Western organisations is an example of why racism is claimed to be subtler in organisations today. It is claimed there has been a shift towards less direct forms of discrimination and it is important to

understand how these are experienced and resisted by ethnic minority employees (Van Laer and Janssens, 2011). Studies have revealed that whilst covert discrimination does exist, presenting this in a binary way to overt discrimination is not helpful, in terms of creating an assumption that the latter no longer exists. In order to understand the complexity of discrimination and how it is maintained in organisations it is important to remain vigilant to both overt and covert discrimination and how they can occur together. Ethnic gatekeeping, whereby individuals are excluded from career opportunities on the grounds of ethnicity, is argued to include aspects of both overt and covert discrimination. In between forms of overt and covert racism can occur by individuals that are located between 'in' and 'out' groups. This is why HR managers through their influencing role with line managers in recruitment and selection decisions and organisational policy have been identified, as gatekeepers to disabled employees by not making the necessary arrangements for adjustments and other underrepresented groups (Harris and Ogbona, 2015).

Experiences of racism and other forms of discrimination are complex and employee experiences of them are not extensively researched or understood. In exposing the lack of attention that Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) leadership progression and careers received Wyatt and Silvester (2015) propose the use of the labyrinth metaphor. First coined and applied by Ealy and Carli (2007) to explain the leadership experiences of women the metaphor also fits effectively with other minority group managerial career experiences. In the absence of research focused on the lived career experience of BME managers, this allowed for assumptions to be made about their experiences and there is not the opportunity to demonstrate their privileged and disadvantaged subject positions in developing effective strategies for career development. The labyrinth metaphor is useful, as it is argued that the reality of BME managerial will reflect complex paths that can include road blocks, back tracking and needing to find new ways forwards. In this respect there is not one guaranteed way to the centre of the labyrinth, which more traditional models of career management imply. Evidence from in-depth qualitative studies supports this assertion, indicating that BME individuals feel excluded from important social networks. These findings relate to research focusing on the importance of mentoring for career advancement, and mentee-mentor relationships in particular. The participants indicated they had been successful in their careers through high task orientation and performance, which was good for social capital gains. However, they also indicated experiencing exclusion from informal organisational culture and this could be a barrier to their progression. Wyatt and Silvester (2015) called for

more research that explored the relationship and interplay between formal and informal organisational processes that can act, as a barrier to different groups.

 The above discussions highlight the importance of exposing all intersectional localities of privilege in management positions and careers. Showunmi, Atewologun, Bebbington (2015) in their study exploring the experiences of leadership with a mixed ethnic group of female managers identified that during the process, none of the participants of any ethnicity, discussed ethnic or class privilege without being prompted to do so. This led the authors to suggest that training and development in this area was needed given their prominent position in leadership roles. The study reveals that privilege is often invisible, as it is taken for granted and many people do not realise the automatic privileges that come from belonging to certain social groups. As explored above there is reluctance to explore the nature of racism in management studies and a tendency to down play it's significant. This is then connected to silenced discussions of ethnic privilege, which means that whiteness goes unchallenged despite its important role in organisational and professional life (Samaluk, 2014). When privilege is invisible and unconscious its absence can be a perceived tension and a signal that it is a problem. There is a much greater tendency to focus on disadvantages that derive from social categorisations rather than to explore privilege, which is reflected in public and organisational policy and creates the conditions, whereby the problem resides in the non-white group in relation to unequal outcome in the labour market (Showunmi, Atewologun, Bebbington, 2015).

 In a study of ethnic minority leaders Atweologun and Sealy (2014) explored how their sometimes privileged position (from their managerial professional status) was managed in their day to day interactions in the work place. What is revealed is the complex ways in which privilege is negotiated and resisted and is reflected in the interactions of others. Research exploring the conditions and ways in which ethnic minority managers and professionals are sometimes privileged, is important to reveal the complex ways in which privilege operates and is fluid, which helps to challenge the taken for granted view that privilege resides in being white (Atewologun, and Sealy, 2014). By counterbalancing whiteness with ethnic privilege in management careers, this starts to break down barriers that maintain the status quo and leads to the oppression and discrimination of ethnic groups.

In a similar way to ethnicity, socio-economic group or class is surprisingly under-researched in relation to the career management experiences of female managers in the UK. Whilst class is not named, as one of the six protected characteristics in employment law it is argued to permeate all sources of discrimination. Proxies for class such as educational attainment and income all play a significant role in the outcomes of women's career experiences but often remain silent in studies of managerial careers (Kirton and Greene, 2010: 7). The changing nature of the class system has been identified by Savage et al (2013) from analysis of the BBC's 2011 Great British Class Survey. This revealed how dominant wealthy elites were distancing themselves from an established or traditional middle class. The middle classes are expanding, particularly in relation to what can be defined as new affluent workers, whereby individuals are defined as middle class in terms of income but do not necessarily have the social capital associated with the traditional middle class. The findings highlight the shifting nature of social class in the UK with a fragmented and growing middle class. Yet, class still plays a significant role, in combination with gender and ethnicity, in how individuals enter the labour market, in already disadvantaged or privileged ways (Kirton and Greene, 2010: 7).

Research on social class has tended to examine the impact of education and schooling in relation to sustaining socio-economic privilege into the future. There has been a tendency to overlook class in relation to its impact in employment. Rivera and Tilcsik (2016) examined the impact of gender and social class on access into elite law firms in the USA and they found that recruiting managers were looking for signals of social class on CVs and preferring men with higher status background (a result of their education), as they felt they would perform better with their clientele. Higher status women did not benefit from their economic status, as there was concern they would want to do 'active parenting' and their commitment to firm would be undermined. Highlighting the role of powerful discourses concerning women and motherhood in impacting female career experiences from the time they start their careers. In a similar in the UK study Jackson (2009) found that individuals with high status symbols on their CV's, including where they went to university were favoured for managerial positions. It should be noted with these studies 'signals' of socio-economic group do not mean that individuals actually occupy that group, so this is a weakness in these studies. However, the studies do expose the insidious nature of class in Western organisations particularly when intertwined with other social categories.

Other studies of gender, ethnicity and class reveal the powerful role of discourses in shaping women's experiences of their career. A mixed ethnic study of women in the managerial pipeline revealed that stereotypical assumptions about the nature of senior management roles for women, meant they would consider opting out of progressings higher. They blamed senior women for demonstrating poor work life balance practices (whether real or imagery), rather than considering the structural or cultural processes that impacts the ability for greater worker-balance in organisations. In this respect concerns for managing work-life balance before entering senior management roles act, as a stereotype threat (Ezzedan, Budworth and Baker, 2015).

3.1.6 The Queen Bee syndrome and intra-gender micro violence discourse

The identified stereotype threat above highlights an important discourse in female management careers in relation to how women treat other women in the workplace. Women in management careers are often accused of occupying Queen Bee status, whereby they are judged to treat other women in the managerial pipeline more harshly (Forbes, 2013). In what can be seen as a demonstration of doing and undoing gender women in senior management roles are judged both in relation to expected male and female behaviours. This also shapes discourses of women not wanting to work with other women due to stereotypical assumptions about their behaviour (Warning and Buchanan, 2009). It is argued that negative intra-gender relations that occur between women in organisations can create additional barriers to female careers in relation to their effectiveness to manage teams and building effective social capital in organisations. Carr and Kelan (2016) identified that the dominant discourse is that 'women don't want to work for other women' and mainstream presentation of women's relationships at work can focus on aspects of intra-gender micro-violence. In their study they revealed a much more complex picture in relation to how women support each other and experience micro-violence, which involves mobilising femininities in the context of hegemonic masculine cultures. Relationships between women are then characterised, as being both affiliated and contested. Exploring the impact of intra-gender relations at work is perceived important for a number of career benefits not least networking. It also relates to how role models and mentors can be identified and selected by women and how they can act in those roles to other women.

Research highlights that women are looking for emotional support, as much as practical career advice from role models and mentors and as such tend to seek different qualities in

potential female and male role models. Through a process of gender identification women selected other women, as role models on the basis on admiration rather than idolisation, as they tend to when looking at male role models. The emotional support women are looking for from other women in the work place requires that women can demonstrate behaviours that are associated with qualities of being compassionate, in the traditional feminine mould (Kelan and Mah, 2014). In comparable findings Cross, Linehan and Murphy (2015) demonstrated that female senior manager role model behaviours can impact the women below them negatively in terms of their career management decisions; when work life balance behaviours are not perceived to be aligned positively with their own. The identification of female role models has been identified as problematic (Singh, Vinnicombe, James, 2006) and these negative behaviours intensity the issues, particularly as impression management techniques have been identified as significant for professional women in order to find sponsors and role models that can help their careers (Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2010).

Mavin, Grandy and Williams (2014) call for more research that examines the nature of women intra-gender relations to move beyond simple presentations of them, as ones of competition and aggression. Their research explored through small- scale qualitative research how the gendered context for intra-gender competition and acts of micro-violence occurred amongst elite female leaders. Micro-violence can occur through disassociating with other women and suppression of opportunity. Exploring the role of the masculine hegemonic cultures and the way in which they impact female social relations is also an essential part of this process. The authors also stress that whilst the topic of intra-gender violence is perhaps uncomfortable for some feminists, it is important to expose how negative female relationships manifest, in order to disrupt them and the structural power conditions that create them.

3.1.7 Diversity discourses and the impact on female management careers

 This section considers the role of diversity management in the career management experiences of women through an intersectional lens. Reflecting on above it is evident that discriminatory behaviours, both overt and covert and other organisational and individual behaviours shape and restrict the career management opportunities for female managers. Diversity management has been the dominant strategy employed in organisations to seek to address inequality and unfair outcomes over the last 20 years. There are two main frames of diversity management. Firstly, the social justice approach, which is infused with discourses

of ethical and moral actions and secondly the mainstream business case approach, which has largely dominated organisational thinking over the last 20 years (Ozbilgin and Tatli, 2011). The business case approach advocates the argument that diversity is good for business from a commercial and economic sense. Initially, this was viewed as a positive way to align business managers with issues of equality. However, when managers are not convinced by a viable business case then programmes of diversity can be abandoned. This textscape was also problematic, as the social justice and moral business case was largely silenced. It is argued that the business case diversity management practices have suppressed and marginalized wider ideas about and interests in diversity in organizations, including moral concerns (Knights, and Omanovic 2016)

The growth and dominance of the business case approach needs to be understood in the wider neoliberalist times in which it was introduced (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000). In this respect the macro-economic climate, deregulation and a reduction in collective rights and changes in the nature of employment contracts and a focus on the individualistic nature of the employment relations allowed the concept to take hold (Zanoni et al, 2010). In a similar way to how the dominant textscape emerged in mainstream HRM the dominant discourses that shape this space relate to the individualised nature of society and the unitarist approaches to managing people. Zanoni and Janssens (2004) identified through a critical discourse analysis how diversity discourses reflect existing managerial practices and underlying power relations. There was space in the discourse for managerial practice and power to be reaffirmed or challenged, through the use of social justice approaches but the former was more common in micro-discursive practice. Career management literature and interventions have also been criticised for moving away from the social justice ethos that once was integral to its conceptualisation. Career management interventions are designed around the promotion of choice without full consideration of who is free to choose (Bluestein et al, 2015).

In this context there is strong emphasis on merit and fairness, as part of the free society. Simpson, Ross-Smith and Lewis (2010) revealed the powerful role that merit and meritocracy discourses can play in how women in senior management understanding tensions and contradictions in their careers. The backdrop to diversity management is also the notion that inequality is a thing of the past, as explored above in relation to racism. Similar arguments have been made in relation to postfeminism and how a focus on neoliberalism and empowerment eradicate the need for political organising in relation to sexism, as this is

understood to be a thing of the past or happening to other women in society (Scharff, 2011). Dominant discourses of merit, individualism and unitarism in organisational approaches to diversity down play the need for collective action. In the context of the free market workforce diversity then becomes a choice and activities can be picked and chosen in the best interest of the organisations, rather in way that can engender change. In what Jonsen et al (2013) label a social tragedy whereby all levels of society are worse off by restrictions placed on them reaching their full potential. It is argued that the public has a vested interested in fair outcomes in careers, as they have invested in educating people and as such it is reasonable to expect equal opportunities and equitable treatment in the labour market.

Poststructuralism has sought to de-essentialise notions of diversity management by exposing how social categories are ascribed rather than naturally occurring and as discussed in this chapter has had some success on shaping policy if not public opinion. The studies also seek to expose the way in which diversity management is overly optimistic in the presentation of the positive benefits that can be achieved. Not least as often studies do not focus on the experiences of the minority groups exposed to manging diversity approaches and discourse. Zanoni and Janssens (2007) sought to address this by exploring the way in which ethnic minority employees can resist forms for managing diversity discourse that seek to control employees. They revealed a series of ways in which minority employees could achieve micro emancipations, such as assimilating to the flexible working policies in a way that worked to their own advantage. The study aimed to focus on how minority employees can engage in control with organisations and managers. In doing so, the perspective shifts from an assumption of discursive control lying only in the hands of managers. The study focuses on the interdiscursivity that can result in both forms of regulation and resistance to the controls employees are subject to.

In order, to address its limitations there are calls for re-balancing of the business case and to see new configuration of the social justice approaches and business case for managing diversity. Tomlinson and Schwabenland (2010) in study of diversity management in the voluntary sector called for a move away the language of the business and to find new articulations of managing diversity that could take in the needs of both employees and the organisations. This view is supported by Jonsen et al (2013) that starts from a position of understanding all the actors in the process of managing diversity to find a common language in relation to diversity management that can reflect a range of interest points and collective

interest points. It is from this position there is an opportunity for organisations to derive policy and practice that supports diverse group's careers and equal opportunities.

This turns attention to the role of HRM and how it's preoccupation with the business value added approach impacts the extent to which a balance can be achieved in managing diversity for both the social justice case and business case perspective. Guest and Woodrow (2012) suggest that HR are limited in their capacity to embed ethical principles into workplaces because of their limited power and it is unrealistic to look to HR managers alone if we want to see more ethical approaches to both strategic HRM and managing diversity. This has led to calls in the HRM field for a focus on Sustainable HRM (Kramar, 2014) to move away from models of strategic HRM based purely on financial goals to the wider recognition of the goals effecting groups of people inside and outside the organisation and the social environment, which would have better diversity and career outcomes for employees and HR practitioner alike.

The utility of the traditional and contemporary models of career management models have been questioned here when looking through the intersectional lens. The origins of the models based on Western ideals of the ideal worker and managerial careers are problematic in terms of effectively capturing the potential contribution and experiences of diverse groups. Compounded by a lack of research that has explored actual managerial careers from the perspective gender, ethnicity and class means that our understanding of careers is based on the dominant elite group perspective and as such have been effective in maintaining the status quo in relation to where power resides in organisational and professional life.

Seeking to understand barriers to female middle management careers from the intersectional perspective requires shifting away from simple discourses and models of career management that do not account for the range of inherent socio-historical barriers that can prevent individuals from non-dominant elite groups progressing. Wyatt and Silvester (2015) highlight the importance of foregrounding the experiences of minority groups and understanding their career management experiences, which is an under-researched area. In this context experiences of disadvantage and privilege can be exposed to reveal a more 'honest' perspective on middle management careers through a gender, ethnicity and class intersectional lens. From understanding this position, the discursive space is opened up for alternative discourses of career management to emerge that more effectively represent the

experiences of those outside the dominant elite groups. The next section of the literature review will expand the discussions of the contribution that feminist poststructuralism and intersectional research has made to these debates.

3.2 The role of poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality in the analysis of female professional and middle management careers

Organisational hierarchies and the management professions have come under the spotlight of poststructuralist feminist scholarship in terms of one the key localities where gender relations are performed and established, which result in inequitable outcomes for women. Primarily this is through the way in which feminist poststructuralism has sought de-essentialise notions of diversity management by exposing how social categories are ascribed rather than naturally occurring. In combination with the intercategorical intersectional lens this thesis argues it is possible to still recognise the significance of social categories and that social group differences do matter, particularly in relation to negative treatment within the labour market (Kirton and Greene, 2015). But what also become significant in both of these paradigms, is that women from certain social categories (and in social group combination) are not automatically seen as victims and they can also experience privilege. It is these sites of discursive resistance, which poststructuralists can expose and help to shift dominant discourses and assumptions about groups and women at the intersect of social categories.

Poststructuralist feminism is able to achieve this by adopting the position that all social categories are contingent and discursive and in doing so seeks to address the natural presentation of gender, and other social categories, as binary and being constructed through discourse (Kelan 2014). The work of Butler (1990 and 2004) has been influential in the field and has had a wider impact in terms of influencing debates within organisational studies for how femininities and masculinities are performed in the workplace, for the maintenance and challenging of power. Butler rejects accounts of the construction of natural binary sex difference and their role in how binary gender differences are then created in a natural and taken for granted manner; *'…gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes…gender is always a doing'* (Butler, 1990: 25). In this respect gender is a relational social script, created in discourse and occurring between difference subject positions (Weedon, 1987). Experience is shaped by discourse and the way in which discourses are used to adopt different subject positions. The power of the discourse is created in the influence of

the subject position adopted. Through gender, presented as natural and stabilised, femininities and masculinities are produced as powerful discourses that create assumptions concerning the behaviour and men and women and their subject positioning. Gender creates acceptable versions of femininities and masculinities, which then becomes reproduced through discourse. Resistance comes from exposing and challenging dominant discourse through foregrounding competing discourses (Kelan, 2014).

The emphasis in poststructuralist feminist research then becomes to explore how femininities and masculinities are done and undone to destabilised essentialised gender binaries, through the promotion of multiple versions of femininities and masculinities. The focus in organisational research has been to explore how femininities and masculinities are done and undone and result in the maintenance and challenges of power within organisations. As such research has tended to be small scale in nature and focuses on revealing intra-discursivity to destabilise hegemonic and normalising discourses of gender representations in organisations (Thomas and Davis, 2005: 720). The aims are not a patriarchal emancipation, as this would be at odds with poststructuralists understanding of power. Rather the emphasis becomes on local struggles and sites of resistance where transformational change occurs through alternative discourse exposure (Baxter, 2003, 2007 and 2017). The contribution of poststructuralists understanding to the nature of gendered management is explored in the following discussions.

3.2.1 Doing and undoing gender in managerial careers

Doing and undoing gender have become popular concepts for understanding the different behavioural experiences of men and women in management careers and the wider organisations (Kelan, 2014). Studying doing gender requires not viewing women and men as binary essentialised categories and instead seeing gender as a social practice. Whilst feminist poststructuralist and the work of Butler (1990 and 2004) has been influential in establishing understandings of the significance of doing gender in organisations the concept has also been understood from ethnomethodological perspectives (see West and Zimmerman, 1987). This had led to some authors applying what could be considered a combination of the two approaches, rather than a purely poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis (Nentwitch and Kelan, 2014). Withstanding this doing gender through the poststructuralist feminist lens has provided rich insights into how femininity and masculinities are fluid and flexible but also

reveal the stubbornness of binary thinking in relation to gender and how this can even impact the researcher, as they seek to destabilise the terms.

Feminist poststructuralist readings of doing gender understand it as a social relational process whereby individuals adopt, through discourse subject positions and representations of self, stereotypical femininities and masculinities (Pullen and Simpson, 2009). In organisations hegemonic masculine power and privilege has meant that women are the 'other' (Collison and Hearn, 1994). As the following discussions explore otherness is managed through processes of doing and undoing gender, as a consequence of women and men trying fitting into hegemonic masculine cultures, evident particularly at the top of organisations.

The relational effect was evident in Eveline and Booth's (2004) study of female junior and middle managers in an academic setting where the position of 'other' was created as a consequence of their lower status in a traditionally masculine organisational hierarchy, intensified by restructuring and cuts. The women experienced wanting to keep administrative and extra work that they were doing invisible for fear of increasing their already 'othered' experience. This feminist poststructuralist analysis reveals the complex process of doing gender and positions of powerfulness and powerlessness that can be gained from being in the position of other. The same research explored how even in seeking to understand performances of gender in fluid ways, the imposition of the binary formulations of men and women and where power resides, was still clearly evident. In addition, the findings exposed the degrees of emotional labour and the impact on the well-being of the women, as a consequence of trying to make invisible conditions of their employment. The women were aware of their subject position of being othered and wanted to cautiously change and improve the organisation but because of the precarious nature of the labour market they didn't want to risk their careers. As such, they experience high degrees of emotional labour as they manage the tensions they experience in the work place. The picture that emerges of doing gender in this context supported the conclusion of Kerfoot and Knights (1998: 10) that a stereotypical reading of feminine passivity can actually be understood, as a reluctant collaborator, which can silence women's resistance to the dominant norm.

In a study of the junior managers in call centres Priola and Brannan (2012) reveal how feminine and masculine management behaviours were still expected in the role but in more subtle ways. They found that often women were recruited for what were perceived to be

softer feminine qualities but once in the role they were required to manage in a more authoritarian way. The research demonstrated the relational process of creating and recreating masculinities and that men and women both colluded in the organisational constructions of gender through adopting masculine subject positions. In this respect the female middle manager understood their role required them to be both feminine and masculine but were ultimately caught between a rock and a hard place, as when they wanted to progress into senior management they were judged by the hegemonic masculine norm. At this locality there was a limited range of alternative discourses to challenge the dominant masculine norm. The lack of alternatives discourses created tensions and frustrations and often the women would opt out of their middle management role. This research demonstrates gender fluidity across the gender binary performances but this does not necessarily lead to the removal of the power conditions that create the binaries in the first instance (Linstead and Pullen, 2006)**.**

 Breaking down binaries of masculine and feminine behaviours and associated attributes, is highly problematic. As evident in the evaluation of Metcalfe and Linstead (2003) feminist poststructuralist research, which sought to challenge masculinist discourses inherent in team theorising and practice. Whilst the broader organisations has been examined for its impact on gender experiences in the work place the nature of teams, as gendered locations had been less exposed. Feminine and femininities were missing in texts of teamwork, such as open communications and supporting each other. In demonstrating the impact of this Fournier and Smith (2006) suggest that Metcalfe and Linsteads's poststructuralist reading of team work actually essentialises womanhood by ascribing the soft managerial practices to the feminine aspects of teamwork whilst indicating that control and performance reside in the masculine. Seeking to understand the complex ways in which gender is done and undone in organisations and voiding the pitfalls of falling into the traps of stereotypically assumed masculine and feminine behaviours is problematical, as the following discussion of feminist poststructuralist contribution to establishing the notions of motherhood explores.

3.2.3 Destabilising notions of 'motherhood' in female career discourse

 Another important way in which gender essentialism has sought to be destabilised by feminist poststructuralism is through exploring discourses of motherhood. The dominant discourse presents womenhood and motherhood, as synonymous and as a biological imperative. Ideals and discourse of motherhood have important consequences for female

careers, as women in the workplace are judged in relation to these discourses. Western discourses of parenting centre on middle class, nuclear family ideals of 'active' or 'intensive' parenting (Wood and Newton, 2006). In the discourse having children is constructed as, labour intensive, emotionally absorbing and of significant financial expensive financially expensive (Hays, 1992). Women experience double jeopardy, as they are expected to live up to the norms of the mothering discourse and that of the ideal worker.

The poststructuralist lens can challenge these dominant discourses by exposing the alternative discourses of single women and motherhood within management. Wood and Newton (2006) explored the experiences of women in management who were not married or did not have children and as such were viewed as not being a whole women. The research explored alternative discourses for managing their 'alternative' adult status in the absence of either marriage or children. Being childless constructed the women, as being hard and unfeminine so they would adopt strategies of resistance to make themselves look more feminine. To illustrate; the women would use childfree instead of childless, the latter resonates with an assumption of something absent or lost. The women would construct discursive practices around being childfree on medical grounds so not to seem unnatural. The way in which doing gender in the context of social relations is evident here and the women move between the positions of challenging and being less powerful in the context of the dominant discourse. Also, evident here is how despite organisational and governmental policy agendas to achieve greater equality between men and women, the dominant discourse of motherhood and childrearing remains stubbornly difficult to challenge (ibid: 344).

The power of the mothering discourse intertwined with what is looks like to be a good manager is also evident in how women selected female role models. In a study of a part-time female managers, women were more critical of senior female leaders, as they perceived them of either opting out of a role in active parenting or if they were childless would be unsupportive other women working long hours with children. Male role models were not judged in this same way and reiterates the importance of the increasing the heterogeneous discourses of women in management positions (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2014).

The persuasiveness of parenting responsibilities being perceived as female, is not necessarily reduced by organisations using gender-neutral discourses of work-life balance and flexible

working. Smithson and Stokoe (2005: 165) in an in-depth study at a large bank in the UK found that flexible working and work-life balance was inherently gendered towards women. Discourses of gender neutrality were re-configured by participants in gendered terms in relation to their own experiences. In this respect the gender- neutral discourses masked, maintain and sometimes encouraged gendered practices. The introduction of parental leave resisted, as the experiences of those taking it up was met with backlash from the wider organisation and questioning the natural order of men taking time off for children. In this context the introduction of gender neutral and progressive policy does not always equate to an improvement in the positions of women, particularly in the context of the continuation of women having the dual responsibilities of work and home, which can be limiting to career progression beyond the position of middle manage. Progressing gender equality cannot be guaranteed through the use of gender-neutral policy (ibid: 163). In this way feminist poststructuralism has been helpful in destabilising the underlying principles and assumptions on which organisational policies are developed but achieving wider change is problematic. Not least due to the presence of gendered discourses throughout society that are sustained through other institutionalised means.

3.2.4 Masculinities and femininities in feminised professions and the impact on career management discourses

The way in which gender manifests in feminised positions, to privilege men in terms of pay and position, has sought to be understood through the perspective of doing and undoing gender (Williams, 1993, Lupton 2000 and Lupton, 2006). Feminised professions offer unique environments in which to explore masculinities to expose their complexity and relational affects, in a context where the men are 'othered' (Hearn, 1996). Exploring how gender is done and under in feminised professions provides the opportunity to expose alternative discourses that resist dominant gendered norms and the extent to which resistance can be accomplished (McDonald, 2013). Masculinity in feminised professions is threatened, as men must adapt to the gender performance demands of feminine work that can cause fear of stigmatization from the non-traditional career choice, as men adopt subject positions that create distance from the feminine (Lupton, 2000).

Of particular significance to the experience of doing and undoing gender in feminised professions are relations that occur between men and women, as these are localities for the

manifestation of complex ways in which femininity can be appropriated, as well as doing masculinity in the face of managing difference. Men will do masculinity to position themselves as different to women. This can be through a focus on the 'strategic' aspects of the role and detachment from the feminine aspects. Distance can also be achieved through fraternity strategies where they can gravitate to areas of masculine practices within feminised work. At the same time men can use assimilation strategies of femininity, through providing care but are often judge on less feminine terms. The experiences of minority men in feminised professions reveals that masculinity is both challenged but also stubbornly remains (Pullen and Simpson, 2009). McDonald (2013) calls for a greater understanding of doing and undoing of gender in feminised profession by men and women to reveal the full relational processes between men and women. More research is required to understand how femininities and masculinities are performed both by men and women in feminised professions. In doing so it would provide insights into the extent to which dominant gender norms are shifting through active resistance to them.

  Poststructuralist feminist studies, as part of the wider project of understanding how gender manifests in professional contexts, such as health care and teaching addresses the gap in mainstream analyses of the professions, which has tended to ignore issues of gender. Professional realms are argued not to be differently experienced from other organisational and institutional spaces where gendered practices can occur, even in heavily feminised and male dominated professions (Hearn et al, 2016). Poststructuralist feminism has been successful over the last 30 years in destabilising essentialised understandings of assigned binary sex categories and the implications of associated femininities and masculinities attached to these. However, destabilising binaries and exposing multiple forms of masculinities and femininities through undoing gender studies does not eradicate binary enactment and experiences of gender within professions and the workplace (Linstead and Brewis (2004) and Pullen and Simpson (2009)). Doing and undoing gender research thus reveals the complex picture for how dominant groups retain power through discourse and structural inequality remains (Gavey, 2011). This highlights the importance of research that continues to seek to challenge dominant discourses of what it means to be a women and man in professional life via providing discursive space for alternative accounts to these hegemonic norms. The following discussion turns to explore how feminist poststructuralism in combination with intersectionality can provide new insights into these debates by seeking to

understand gender constructions and doing and undoing gender via the intersects of ethnicity, class and other shifting subject positions.

3.2.5 Poststructuralist feminist scholarship and intersectionality

The literature review now moves on to explore the relationship (and possibilities) between feminist poststructuralism and the study of intersectionality. Natural bed fellows in that both concepts have, as their central concern the acknowledgment of the differences among women but creates concern for some feminists that this '*handy catchall phrase that aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it'* (Phoenix, 2006: 187), diminishes the standpoint of women (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011). As purported by Mooney, Ryan and Harris (2017) the nexus of ethnicity and class (as just the starting point for other social differences) brings new insights into gender inequality that Broadbridge and Simpson (2011) need not fear from an intersectional approach. It also tackles the problematic issue of inclusion and exclusions that have dogged Western feminist perspectives. In this respect Davis (2008) maintains that bringing feminist poststructuralism and intersectionality together provides greater political credibility for the former by addressing the concerns it had become too distance from the realities of women's political lives. As explored in the following discussion the combination of the two approaches can illuminate the social and material consequences of the combined impact of gender, race and class, and when achieved through the poststructuralist project of deconstructing categories, reveal the complex and dynamics workings of power (ibid: 74).

Specifically, Holvino (2010) identified three main contributions that feminist poststructuralism can make to studies of intersectionality. As explored previously in this section it supports the destabilising of subjectivities and how they can be understood, as non-essential and multiple in organisational and governmental policy. From this position detailed exploration and critique of organisational and professional practices that sustain gender, ethnicity and class disadvantage through hegemonic discourse and sites of resistance can occur. The alternative discursive space is a key contribution for engendering change in organisations, as it challenges taken for granted assumptions that maintain the status-quo. The final contribution is the focus on reflexivity in the stance of the researcher, which challenges continuous reflection on their own social positioning in the context of the intersections, which they are exploring. The following exploration of a poststructuralist

intersectional study examining the impact of mentoring programmes reveals the way in which these goals can be achieved.

Buzzandl et al's (2015) study explores the mentoring experiences of ethnic women in a University Engineering department. In the face of the problematic issue of retaining and attracting women to STEM academic workplaces, this research sought to examine in detail how strategies such as mentoring, that have been employed to retain diverse groups of women, were experienced by the women exposed to them. The poststructuralist lens revealed the ambiguity and disenchantment that was experienced with the mentoring process and through relationships with the mentees. This contrasted with the positive hegemonic view of mentoring that the university provided. The women described their mentoring experiences in gendered, raced and classed ways, particularly in the context of where they fitted into the overall ranking system of academic class, which is well established in academia. In this respect they often felt exposed, as the other in the mentoring process and an assumption that career gains from the process could be achieved was challenged. The study reveals the importance of understanding in-depth the realities of career interventions, as the participants adopt a variety of subject positions to the experience, ranging from suspicion, vulnerability and disenfranchisement from the process.

As the above study reveals poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality studies are helpful in exposing intra-professional relations and where access and experiences of senior professional roles are associated with higher status and membership from certain social categorisations (Hearn et al, 2016). Structural inequalities and the impact they have on diverse group outcomes have remained stubborn to address in the profession. Whilst poststructuralism and intersectionality can provide useful contributions to these debates they are often side-lined in mainstream discussions in management and professions. Some studies have adopted what McBride, Hebson and Holgate (2015) would describe, as intersectional sensitive approach, whereby research is not framed as a piece of intersectional research but demonstrates a sensitivity to the issue of seeking to understand inequality in organisations involves the inclusion of the more than one social category group. This was evident in the following study of legal profession in England and Wales, which explored the career strategies of women and black minority men, who whilst entering the profession in significantly more numbers still experiences inequality, particularly in relation to access to more senior role. This research revealed six career strategies that involved assimilation,

compromise, playing the game, reforming the system, location/relocation and withdrawal (Tomlinson et al, 2013: 245). The strategies, as such tended to reproduced inequality by 'fitting-in' to existing structures rather than providing an opportunity to transform them.

3.2.6 Doing gender and othering discourses in intersectional research of female middle managers and careers

'Doing gender' and 'othering' whilst important feminist poststructuralist terms, they have also featured in intersectional research that has contributed to our understanding of female middle manager careers. Whilst they do not take a particular poststructuralist feminist stance the influence of doing gender and the way in which discourses contribute to the experiences of the women at different intersectional locations is evident. Kelan (2014) conducted an intersectional study based on gender and age at two professional services firms, where young female and male professional were interviewed in the context of their career goals. Discourses of the biological clock where evident in the discursive practices of men and women that placed the biological imperative of motherhood on women and acted as a barrier to female career progression. The gendered connotations of motherhood and womanhood took effect in the discursive practices of the women and men even before they had children and as such motherhood discourses impact the career experiences of women, whether they have children or not. Contradicting this position was another key discourse in the talk of the participants, which was the notion that contemporary workplaces are equitable and fair, which highlights the limitations of the gender-neutral policy and practices identified by Smithson and Stokoe (2005). Kelan (2014) labelled this discourse 'generational change' as gender inequality was constructed, as a thing of the past and happening elsewhere. Discrimination was constructed, as taking place elsewhere in client organisations but experiences of discrimination did not relate to them. The discourse created the condition in both men and women that led to an 'unspeakability of inequality', as discrimination belonged elsewhere or in the past.

Another important contribution to understanding the careers of middle managers made by intersectionality and the need to challenge assumptions concerning fixed binary categories of male and female and black and white, is where and how privilege is assumed to reside. The emphasis on binary categories creates deficit models of the 'other', which means that women and ethnic groups are compared to white, middle-class ideals. Atewologun and Sealy (2014.

424) call for more intersectional research that identifies privilege outside of white middle class norms and its fluid nature. Addressing these calls Mooney, Ryan and Harris (2017) in an intersectional study of gender careers in the hotel sector revealed that the nature of traditional linear careers in the sector produces a system that privileges certain groups of men and some women. Ethnicity was exposed in combination with social class to impact the progression of men and some women in different ways. Here, the exposing of privilege in the hands of individuals by socially ascribed categories of difference shines a spotlight on when belonging to a range of social groups affords privileges and powerlessness in different ways and has significant career implications.

3.3 Gaps in the current literature and addressing the current studies research aims, question and objectives

Building on previous discussions in the thesis this chapter has explored the theoretical and empirical contribution that poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality has made to the study of female professional and middle management careers. The chapter has also identified how female careers in the HR profession are under researched from an intersectional perspective. These discussions identified the importance of providing alternative discursive space to expose the role of professional hegemonic discourses in curtailing and containing female career progression within the profession, which this research seeks to address. Exploring the role of the dominant professional discourse of commerciality on the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession is an expressed objective of this research. Managing diversity discourses, which focus on the business case and individualistic explanations for discrimination have also been identified in this chapter, as requiring further research, in order to understand continued inequality and the maintenance of traditional structures of power. This research will address calls for more research that can expose the silences that create the 'unspeakability' of inequality (Kelan, 2014) through exploring the role of dominant managing diversity discourses on the career experiences of the women. This provides an opportunity to contribute to the small but growing body of research exploring the role of discourses in HRM and the importance of reflexivity (Mahaddevan and Kilian-Yasin, 2016).

The use of intersectional analysis still remains relatively limited within studies of careers and professions work and there are calls for more attention in terms of greater sensitivity to

intersectional issues and explicit intersectional studies (Ryan, 2012). This is not least to address the issues of over generalization that leads to the reinforcement of stereotypes against marginalised groups (Mcbride, Hebson and Holgate, 2015). This is highlighted in discussions in this chapter concerning the important role that intersectional research can play in opening up discursive space to marginalised groups, which reveal positions of privilege, as well of powerlessness from intersectional localities. This view is supported from the professional studies perspective whereby Hearn (2016) suggests that *'...the study and analysis of professions and professionalization as neutral phenomena and without attending to gender and intersectional structures, processes and change is unscientific and careless indeed'*. Intersectional approaches have also been identified, as largely absence within the career management academic domain (Ryan, 2012: 543). As such this research supports calls for more intersectional and 'darkside' career research that can expose conditions and that create sites of privilege and powerfulness in the course of their middle management career. Contemporary models of careers are criticised for being overly positive in portraying the nature and the outcomes of careers. The literature tends to focus on positive outcomes rather the negative experiences in careers. In doing so, discursive space is opened up for alternative discourses of career management that can take account of the challenging aspects of managing a career. This creates the conditions for the greater acceptably of career failure or challenges, which can be an equally valuable learning experience, as career success (Baruch and Vardi, 2016). This research seeks to contribute to a greater diversity of career discourse by providing the opportunity to expose alternative discourses at intersectional localities, which provide the context and space for different understandings and potential solutions for more equitable outcomes in HR careers.

Doing gender in feminised professions was also identified as under researched in feminised professions, particularly from an intersectional perspective. Opportunities to explore key discourses associated with the Queen Bee syndrome and working for, and with other women, and their impact on female middle management careers will be addressed through exploring the role of dominant gendered discourses in the career management experiences of the participants. The research will also contribute to the small body of feminist poststructuralist studies that have applied a specific intercategorical intersectional lens in career management studies, such as the findings of Buzzandl et al's (2015) study which revealed through a gendered, ethnicised and classed intersectional analysis how female academics experience disenchantment with the mentoring process. Developing alternative career management

discourses, as experienced by women at the intersection of gender, ethnicity and class help challenge dominant discourses and create transformational change through further attention to new and evolving discourses (Baxter, 2007).

In sum the identified gaps in the literature are sought to be addressed by the following overarching research question and research objectives applied here, which are;

How do dominant professional and gendered discourses within the HR profession shape the career management experiences of female middle managers at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class?

RO 1 To explore the role of dominant, commercially orientated HR professional discourses on the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 2 To explore how gendered careerist and motherhood discourses shape the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 3 To examine the role of dominant managing diversity discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 4 To explore the role of ethical and sustainable HR discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

The next chapter conducts an in-depth exploration of the ontological and epistemological debates associated with applying poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality and provides a detailed explanation and justification for how the research objectives were operatioanlised.

CHAPTER 4 Methodology - Philosophical debates

4.1 Introduction

The methodology chapter is divided into two main chapters. Firstly, the philosophical issues that shaped and underpinned the research are identified and explored. In the second chapter a detailed discussion and justification of the primary research method is provided in the context of the philosophical underpinning of the research. In doing so a rationale for the choices made in the methods for collecting and analysing the data are explained and justified. The shared ontological and epistemological foundations of poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality is explored in greater depth in this section. This includes a discussion of the compatibility and relationship between the feminist poststructuralist and intersectional grounding of the research.

 The chapter will go on to endorse the 'nimble' approach to intersectionality in employment research (Mooney, 2016) that has been advocated as a means of resolving the methodological dilemmas that are sometimes associated with intersectional research. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the choice and application of a poststructuralist feminist approach to discourse analysis based on Baxter's methodology (2003, 2007, 2008 and 2017). The important role reflexivity played throughout the research process, expected in feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis and intersectional research, is also explored and justified.

 The operationalisation of intersectionality and its implementation is subject to considerable debate. Despite the significant role and popularity of intersectionality in social and organisational research in recent years the same level of attention has not been paid to establishing a commonly supported methodological approach (Shields, 2008 and Nash, 2008). Indeed, it has been identified as problematic to construct a common research paradigm *'...when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions in social life and categories of analysis'* (McCall, 2005, 1773). In recognising the lack of a specific intersectional methodology in social research it becomes pertinent for methodological frameworks to be designed that draw on the resources available in the specific discipline (Rodriquez et al, 2016). As such, in this chapter the key, ontological, epistemological and methodological preferences in the discipline of organisational and careers studies will be

considered within the broader framework of the poststructuralist feminist underpinning of this study. This chapter justifies the methodological approach adopted in the context of the continued debates within the literature regarding the effective operationalisation of intersectional research to challenge inequality and enact change (Verloo et al, 2012). Transformatory change in relation to the current unequal career experiences and outcomes and the heterogeneous nature of career management support and guidance within the HR profession is an expressed objective of this research.

Consideration is paid throughout this chapter to how intersectionality has been described as a travelling concept, as it takes on new meanings and application in different contexts (Knapp, 2005). An accepted (although debated) reality in feminist studies, in the field of organisational and employment studies intersectionality is under used (Mcbride, Hebson and Holgate, 2015). This is evident in the field of HRM and career management, where attention is paid to the distinct or individual social categories and in relation to academic, professional and policy-based literature; the intersections of these categories are often silent. A key concern of researchers interested in intersectionality is to provide a voice to marginalised or silenced groups. However, there is significant debate regarding how to effectively operationalise intersectional research, which avoids deconstructing the issues down to subjective identity and ignoring the wider structural and power regimes that shape the experiences of groups of individuals in organisations and their professional life. The application of a poststructuralist feminist framework and discourse analysis, as outlined here and contributes to the debates on how to effectively operationalise intersectional research that expose complex and contradictory systems of inequalities and the power relations that maintain them, in this case the career position and experiences of women in the HR profession.

4.2 Poststructuralist feminism

Poststructuralist feminism adopts the ontological position that gender is discursively constructed and fractured and rejects the notion that a single female standpoint can exist. Viewed as a radical departure of 'second wave' feminism and the 'politics of revolution'. Poststructuralist feminism rejects a single narrative of women's ontological oppression and instead focuses on the category of 'women', as being complex, multiple and fractured (Thomas and Davis, 2005). Poststructuralist feminist thought emerged at the same time as black feminism, which criticized the capacity for single standpoint feminism to effectively

take into account the oppression and privilege experienced by women from different ethnic and class groups. For some, the attempts at diluting the unifying category of women, as the ontological basis for shared experiences of oppression and collective action is damaging to the cause of the feminism (Townsley, 2003). In recognising the concerns of standpoint feminism moving away from a unifying position of women grounded in the material, the poststructuralist and intersectional philosophy adopted here provides the opportunity to deconstruct the normative assumptions of the categories of women and men and in doing so provides the opportunities for positive change (McCall, 2005). As explored in this thesis the aim of the current research is to expose and provide competing discourses to challenge the status quo of hegemonic discourses that shape the career experiences of female professionals in the HR profession. A poststructuralist feminist lens provided the opportunity to do so by avoiding the demarcation of how inequalities, oppression and privilege are caused when analyses are rooted in single master categories alone.

4.3 Poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality a shared epistemology?

The ontological and epistemological discussions above highlight how poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality sit neatly together, as philosophical frameworks. The poststructuralist tradition of drawing on the work of Foucault (1980) and how the role of power means it is possible to be both oppressed and exercising power makes the connection to intersectional research even more desirable;

> 'Power is employed and exercised through net like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between the threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power' (Foucault 1980:98).

The recognition in poststructuralist feminism of the need to focus not just on particular subjectivities in relation to gender inequalities but to expose the discourses that sustain material and structural power has meant the framework has an important contribution to make to intersectional research. This shared epistemology draws on a strong social-constructionist view of knowledge and seeks to highlight the relationship between knowledge and power, how individuals construct knowledge at the intersection of different social locations, including ethnicity, gender and class. In doing so meta-discourses that are often gendered, raced and classed are challenged. This provides an opportunity in organisational studies to provide a critique of the dominant discourses that tend to be shaped on unique

categories such as 'womanhood' to be exposed and provide space for a more nuanced space for understanding unequal outcomes that are based on identities that are unstable and complex and non-additive (Holvino, 2008). The epistemological position of poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality adopted here does not seek to replace meta-narratives with new grand discourses but seeks to provide discursive space within the professional body, in communities of HR practitioners and in organisations for alternative discourses that reflect the career management experiences of women from intersectional subject positions.

Herein lies one of the main challenges to research projects that support the alignment of poststructuralist and intersectional epistemologies and is explored here for balance and justification of the philosophical and methodological approach adopted in this thesis. In what Archer-Mann (2013) refers to as an unhappy marriage the attempts by both intersectional theories and poststructuralist feminists to *'embrace polyvocality or the inclusion of many voices or vantage points in their construction of social reality'* dilutes the category of women and political and social action potential. As 'truths' become multiple and meta-narratives problematic the pursuit of generalizable theories are rejected. Instead providing space for the many voices and positional points for the construction of social reality is preferred, as a means for achieving greater clarity. Critics of poststructuralist feminists and their weddedness to intersectionality means that, as a political movement feminism then become less visible, more localized and systematic patriarchal oppression is diminished. Left in its wake are '*scattered forms of resistance marching to different drums'* (Archer- Mann, 2013).

In acknowledging these debates this thesis supports the view that a feminist and intersectional lens actually provide more profound opportunities for social action and change by building coalitions and communities of movements based on difference within the highly feminised profession of HRM. A poststructuralist intersectional framework provides the opportunity to challenge hegemonic discourses and presentations of women that maintain the status quo and inequality. This is the aim of an intersectional approach not simply a desire to abandon single categorisation (Tomlinson, 2017). In fact, it is argued that there is too much current research in relation to employment outcomes that rely on single dimensions of social inequality (Breslin, Pandey and Riccucci, 2017). As is the case with careers in the HR profession there is a need for new space for understanding the barriers and enablers for senior leadership opportunities, which a poststructuralist intersectional lens can provide. In doing, so calls for an intersectional analytic lens for expanding our knowledge of leadership in

organisations and to highlight the barriers to leadership opportunities are achieved (Breslin, Pandey and Riccucci, 2017).

4.4 The 'Nimble' Intersectional analytical approach

Mooney (2016) purports the view that researchers must ask four key methodological questions when undertaking intersectional research in order to provide clarity to the implicit assumptions held in relation to nature of intersectional research transparent. These questions are;

1. Is it an intersectional study?
2. What is the intersectional framing that fits the context of the research?
3. Should the study be based on individual identity or organizational and societal processes
4. What are the meanings attached to categories of difference? (ibid.; 709)

The first two questions prompt the researcher to fully reflect if the area of interest is an intersectional study and does conducting intersectional research address the theoretical underpinning of the research and the research questions. It is clear from the previous chapters of this thesis that careers in the HR profession and in particular how female middle managers progress into senior management positions are under-researched from an ethnicity and class perspective. The continued existence of pay gaps at senior levels within the HR profession and how females progression slows down at middle management level provides the impetus for this intersectional study to understand the complex causes of why progression in this area is so hard. In addition, given the remit of the HR profession for the promotion of equality and diversity in the wider profession the lack of more in-depth and searching questioning of the HR's professions own diversity credentials is problematic for the wider legitimacy of the profession. Current studies of HR careers have tended to centre on dominant or privileged individuals rather than explore the more nuanced position of the differences in experiences between different groups and in different groups. A main aim of this research was to address these current gaps in the literature, and in doing so meet the criteria of what Mooney (2016) identified as an intersectional study and for choosing an intersectional research approach that clearly addresses the theoretical underpinning and research questions of the research.

The final two questions relate to first, if the focus of the intersectional study should be based on individual identity or organisational and societal processes and secondly, what and by who are meanings attached to social categories of difference (Mooney, 2017: 711- 712). These two interrelated issues were important reflection points in the research process and the following discussion explores the justification and approach adopted in this thesis.

It is argued that this feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis seeks to understand individual subject positionings *and* the organisational and societal process that shaped this, as a joint process. Social categories were understood to be fluid, performed and mutually constructed and with a particular interest as to how this happened. Essential to this analysis was that imposed social categories are understood in the terms of structural and material power that manifest through hegemonic discourses at the societal, professional and organisational level.

This research adopted the above position by viewing ethnicity, class and gender, as non-essential categories but mobile processes that through the process of the discursive context are constructed and co-constructed. A discourse analysis can reveal how subject positions can be fluid and bring positions of both power and privilege. In presenting the role of competing discourse the possibility for resistance and an alternative path, particularly here in the context of career management can be achieved. Thus, not presenting certain groups as always victimised and other always privileged (Mooney, 2016: 712).

These debates were clearly associated to these Mooney's final question 'what are the meanings attached to categories of difference' or how are the categories of differences established. In this respect it is important for researchers to identify the stance they took to social categories that are complex, multiple and intersectional. This relates to the choice of social categories that are selected for a given and study and how they relate to the philosophical underpinnings of the research. McCall's 2005 seminal article in Signs entitled 'The Complexity of Intersectionality' remains one of the most commonly sighted and applied approaches on how to study intersectionality. Researchers still turn to her approach as evidenced by recent articles in leading employment studies academic journals such as Human Relations, The British Journal of Management and Work, Organisation and Society.

McCall's work identifies three approaches to studying intersectionality that are ultimately selected by researchers on the basis of their stance towards social categories and

categorisation. As selected here the intercategorical approach is grounded in the philosophical position that social categories should can and should be deconstructed: "…*intercategorical complexity*, requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationships of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions' (McCall, 2005: 17773).

It is important to clarify that the poststructuralist interpretation applied in this thesis to social categories is not the outright rejection of social categories, but emphasizes more a focus on *deconstructing* categories and seeking to understand how these categorisations have been established through discursive practices that are repetitive and powerful (McCall, 2005). The complex interaction of categories requires a more complex, messy and fluid treatment but this does not have to mean the total abandonment of social categories (Garry, 2011: 830). A poststructuralist feminist lens which views gender as non-fixed provides an opportunity to expose and challenge the use of simple categorisations, which can lead to the creation of more stereotypes (Baxter, 2017). This is particularly important in studies of HRM and the HR profession, as the role of employment law and emphasis on six categories of protected characteristics infuses the thinking within the profession into a single categorisation mind-set. The intercategorical approach applied here, within a fluid and transient understanding of social categories seeks to de-stabilise this view.

In this respect poststructuralist feminist research seeks to explore 'doing categories' rather than understanding experiences of women from structural 'macro- perspectives' of gender, ethnicity and class. It is argued that this affords the opportunity for a more balanced understanding between structure and individual subjectivities (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013). The contributions of feminist poststructuralist research and this thesis are that the analysis does not stop at the subjective individual level but seeks to understand how power and knowledge are shifting and maintained through discursive practices. In essence this overcomes one of the key challenges in intersectional research namely, that there is too much focus on individual identity subjectivities rather than the social processes and systems of power that maintain them (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013).

There is also the transformational potential of this research in revealing the role of discourses in the HR profession in shaping the career experiences of females HR managers, providing the opportunity for competing discourses to come the fore and a community of action within

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the profession that supports greater equity in career outcomes. As per the poststructuralist grounding of the research the aim here is not to replace hegemonic discourses with new grand discourses but to expose the fluidity, multiplicity and competing discourses that can positively or negatively support women's careers in the HR profession at the middle management level. This feminist poststructuralist intercategorical approach supports the calls from McBride, Hebsor and Holgate (2015) for organisational studies to go beyond analyses that are grounded on single categories that only represent a subset of more complex issues.

4.5 Discourse analysis, poststructuralist feminism and intersectionality

 As the proceeding discussion explores, central to a feminist poststructuralist analysis is the exposure of the role of discursive practices in power and knowledge production. Discourse analysis is popular approac in feminist employment studies and the wider organisational field (Kelan, 2007). There is also a wide array of methods of applying and using discourse analysis in organizational research. It is essential for researchers to detail their approach and to define what discourse and discourse analysis means to them and the relevance to their research (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000). Therefore, at this stage of the chapter it is important to identity how the use of 'discourses' was exposed and explored in the research. There is considerable debate amongst feminists regarding the most appropriate approach to discourse analysis when conducting feminist scholarship. Even amongst poststructuralist feminists there are differing views on the need for a specific Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) or if traditional critical discourse analysis is adequate for its means. Taking these debates and controversies into account the following discussion outlines my approach and application of discourse analysis in this thesis.

 Poststructuralist feminists' association with discourse analysis emerged from its grounding in the thinking's of Foucault (1972: 49) in relation to how discourses act as practices that *'systematically form the objects of which they speak'* and this approach is adopted here. As with many key concepts in social research the precise definition of 'discourse' is contested and applied in many contexts differently (Phillips and Di Domenico, 2011). The variety of definitions for 'discourse' have in common that ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our experiences but play an active role in changing and creating it (Rasinski, 2011). Essential for feminist poststructuralism in defining discourse and discourse analysis is the role of power and how the self if not fixed but constantly positioned and repositioned through discourse.

Drawing on the work of Foucault (1980: 98) Baxter (2002) asserts that individuals both negotiate and shape their subject positions within a range of conflicting discourse, which are dependent on cultural, social and historical contexts. In this respect the alignment to intersectional thinking is apparent in that gender cannot be understood as a unitary subject. As applied in this thesis in using feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis, gender should not be isolated from class, ethnicity and profession, as reducing the complexity through focusing exclusively on gender will diminish the explanatory power of the researcher. According to Foucault (1980: 98) power should:

' …never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as commodity or piece of wealth. Power is exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the positions of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation'.

In this respect discourse, knowledge and power are interwoven and shape an individual's identities and experiences. As applied in this thesis the intersectional and poststructuralist lens helps to provide an explanation of the powerful discursive positioning that takes place in relation to career experiences and progression at the middle management level in the HR profession. The poststructuralist position on discourses and discourse analysis highlights how positions and relations of power shift, making participants more powerful and powerless at different times. This is important in intersectional research, as a key aim is to reveal how privilege as well as disadvantage can be afforded to individuals in organisations; thus providing a more nuanced understanding of equality of opportunities in organisations.

In adopting a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis it is important to emphasise the role of 'sites' in the subjective construction of discourses and the need to understand their historical production and regulation. In this respect discourses define the reality of the social world for individuals inhibiting it. Power and knowledge are then interrelated; power is the function of knowledge and knowledge is the exercise of power. In studying discourses and the institutionalised way of speaking, social researchers can access mechanisms of power that regulate the behaviour and thoughts of individuals. As per this research that explores gender, ethnicity and class from the intercategorical perspective understanding the social- historical

conditions of the establishment of the HR 'profession' and different groups within it is important for identifying the statements that shape female careers in the profession.

In line with this and the view of the self, as not fixed and constantly positioned and repositioned through discursive practices, poststructuralist feminists have sought to explore key institutional 'sites' and discourse 'statements' that reinforce gendered relations and positions of power, as is the case here in the career management experiences of middle managers in the HR profession. Baxter (2003) maintains that poststructuralist discourse analysis is different to traditional Critical Discourse Analysis because it can account for fluctuating positions of power between speakers and how they are continuously reconstructed through a series of competing discourses. In addition, the goal of poststructuralist feminism is not to replace grand or dominant discourses with an emancipatory social theory, as this would be another 'will to truth' and would ultimately become totalising (ibid: 831). These positions are important to clarify in the intersectional context of this thesis. A main aim of this research is to reveal silenced alternative discourses at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class amongst middle managers in the HR profession. In doing so this should not mean identifying certain groups as victims but rather to reveal through the analysis of the spaces, gaps, ambiguities and contradicting and competing discourses in their talk, the sites and opportunities for resistance and privilege, as well as disadvantage (Baxter, 2017).

The poststructuralist and intersectional lens of this research lends itself clearly to a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis and as explained above cannot be considered to be a traditional CDA approach or even Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA). The latter would be problematic within an intersectional lens as it is seems to focus mainly on gender whilst other social categorisation are ignored (Wodak, 2008: 195). Conversely, the former has been criticised for tending to side-line female researchers and female voices (Lazar, 2005). However, it is important to identify how there is not one generalizable definition for Critical Discourses Analysis and FCDA and in the following section where Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis is explored in more depth in the context of how it was applied in this thesis, it is clear that there are cross overs between the three approaches, particularly in relation to challenging simplistic dichotomies, being aware of complex contexts and constant researcher reflexivity (Wodak, 2008).

In this thesis the approach applied is closer to the FPDA for a number of key reasons that are made clear in the following discussion. Baxter (2003) developed the FPDA approach where a

key function of poststructuralism is to contest the authority of established methodological approaches such as critical discourse analysis and conversational analysis. In doing so the approach outlined below based on the principles of FPDA that were adopted in this thesis do not represent a one size fits all approach or a 'grand narrative' for the most effective means to conduct feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis. Rather the view supported is that this approach can be understood as not all encompassing but the most contextually relevant for the research project undertaken here. As a researcher there is also the opportunity to justify and explain the elements of the approach that most effectively fitted with this research project. In the next chapter, in the discussions of the operationalisation of the research methods, it will be made clear how the underpinning principles outlined here were in embedded into the research design and analysis of the participants talk.

4.6 Applying FPDA

One of the main reasons for selecting FPDA as a framework for discourse analysis in this thesis is that the emphasis within FPDA on localised and bottom up progression on specific employment issues (verses more emancipatory change as advocated in critical discourse analysis) through giving space to marginalized or silenced voices fits well with the aims of this thesis. Currently there is limited or no space provided to intersectionality in the discussions of career management and effective progression into senior management positions within the HR profession. If a CDA or feminist CDA approach was adopted here again there could be too much emphasis on established binaries of those with power and inadvertently creating victims in the emphasising black/white dichotomies or middle/working class. This approach can simply reinforce hierarchal positions and opportunities for privilege that the research is trying to break down. The emphasis in FPDA is on revealing via a *polyphony* approach marginalised voices alongside those more commonly heard to produce a greater richness and plurality of understanding in relation to the discursive practices in shifting power relations, as per the intersectional aims of this research (Baxter, 2003).

FPDA also places emphasis on *intertextuality* to expose the way in which discourses are interwoven and competing and how multiple discourse position the subject in complex and fluid ways (Baxter, 2017). As the following chapters of this thesis reveal how professional and organisational discourse competed and were in tension, as they navigated their career management experiences. The emphasis in writing up their discursive talk was to focus on

the fluidity and multiplicity of discourses and the gaps and ambiguities in the talk of participants. It is in the gaps and spaces via intersectional experiences that revealed where the potential transformations and new insights in relation to career experiences of women in the HR profession were possible.

A final key consideration in FPDA is how discourses are named, which is a controversial area for any researcher involved in discourse analysis. In adopting an FPDA approach the validity of the discourse can be improved in two keys that were adopted here in this research. Firstly, it is important from an PFDA perspective to be embedded in the community of practice where you are researcher and in essence trying to build an ethnographic experience. In doing so the researcher is more exposed to and immersed in use of discourses in their natural settings. In this respect my involvement in the HR community through my role in the CIPD branch and leading the MA HRM programme for HR practitioner provided this embedded experience in the community of practice. The second key aspect to effectively naming discourses is extensive reflexivity and acknowledgement that as a researcher how I experience the world is also shaped by hegemonic and competing discourses. The following discussions highlight how reflexivity has played an essential role on the research.

4.7 Reflexivity

As the previous discussion identified reflexivity is an integral part of the process of undertaking PFDA. One of the key contributions that poststructuralist feminism has made to employment studies is inspiring a higher degree of reflexivity amongst researchers in relation to the role of their identity, as the producer of knowledge (Holvino, 2010). This requires reflecting on your own potential complicity in gendered power relations and reflecting on the role of privileged researcher (Benschop and Verloo 2016). At the outset of this thesis I outlined an intersectional perspective on my identity and how it has been fluid and shaped by conducting this research and other life events during the time. It is also important at every stage of the research process to reflect on how I am also affected by competing discourses. A key element of the reflexive process is to acknowledge how the discourses I identity in this thesis will ultimately be partial and provisional and they have been shaped by my background (Baxter, 2017), as an HR academic with previous experience in the HR profession. This embedded approach differs from CDA approaches where there is an emphasis through the

use of the word 'critical' to ensure there is a distance between myself and the data and that self-reflection is used to achieve this. In rejecting this position and adopting a PFDA approach the emphasis instead is on reflecting on my own discursive practices and how my identity, as researcher has shaped the experience and talk of participants and my embeddedness in the context. These issues will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

4.8 Summary

This Methodology Chapter has explored the philosophical grounding of the research. The ontological position that knowledge is socially constructed and there is no objective or independent reality was explored through the feminist poststructuralist and intersectional position of fractured and multiple identities. The significant role of feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis in the research was examined, so to provide an appropriate explanation for the means of the accessing subjective realities in relation to the career experiences of middle managers in the HR profession from the perspective of ethnicity, gender and class. The important role reflexivity played through the research was considered in the context of its significance to the underpinning philosophy of FPDA and intersectionality. In the following chapter a detailed account of the research methods undertaken in the context of the overarching philosophical research issues is provided.

CHAPTER 5 Methodology - Research Methods

The previous chapter explored the philosophical debates that underpinned the research. The following discussions outline how the research was operationalised and actually conducted to address the research question and research objectives. As identified above reflexivity is an essential component of post-structuralist feminist discourse analysis and intersectionality. Placing an emphasis on reflexivity forms part of the discussion in this chapter for how the research may be evaluated and adheres to ethical principles associated with feminist scholarship.

5.1 Research design

The research design outlined below is qualitative in nature given the emphasis on small-scale in-depth research that provides a detailed and 'lived' account of the participants' experiences, which is prioritised by feminist poststructuralism (Baxter, 2007). The analysis is based at the individual level and how women, from an intercategorical intersectional perspective of gender, ethnicity and class, experience career management at the middle-management level in the HR profession. As per the poststructuralist underpinning of the research the aim was not to replace current dominant discourses with new grand discourses, nor to generalise to the whole population but rather to reveal through this in-depth analysis, the potential impact of professional and career discourses on the careers of women in the profession. As such the fluidity and competitive nature of discourses are revealed and how they impact at the intersection of gender, ethnicity and class in advantageous and negative ways.

5.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected as the qualitative method of enquiry. This method allowed participants to talk at length around the subject of their career management experiences at the middle management level (Cassell, 2011). In seeking to understand the role of discourses in shaping the career management experiences of the women, it was important to have an interview structure that was not overly standardised and allowed participants to discuss their career management experiences in an authentic manner. The questions were open ended, as it allowed participants to speak for themselves and avoids them being treated as passive agents (Kamenou, 2007). At the same time some standardisation was required to support the comparison and analysis.

To illustrate; every participant at the start of the interview was asked the question '*Tell me how you started a career in HR'*. This usually started the participants discussing at length experiences from school, college, university and the influence of friends and family on their decision to start a career in the profession. This question was always followed by '*What role do you think your family background played in starting a career in HR'*. This supported the participants discussing and reflecting on their background, often from a cultural, religious and national perspective. Following this the semi-structured interview took a less standardised approach and developed with the discussions of the participants. However, every topic identified in the interview guide was discussed with participants but this would be at different stages of the interviews, as the discussions flowed.

As the above discussions highlights semi-structured interviews supported an aim of the research project, which was for participants to speak in their own words about their experiences of career management in the HR profession, from their unique subject positions. In this respect in order to explore the role of gender, ethnicity and class on their lived experiences questions about these were not directly put to participants so that difference would emerge through their talk, rather than be imposed (Mooney, 2017). A directed approach in this could have also damaged the rapport with participants. Rapport between the researcher and participant is essential in feminist interviewing, as is reflecting on the power dynamics that can exists between the two. A key issue associated with building effective rapport in feminist qualitative interviewing is the impact of the researcher, as being an 'insider' or 'outsider' to the research population they are studying.

There is considerable debate within feminist literature concerning the benefits of being an insider or outsider in relation to achieving rapport and authentic interview data (Pollock and Eldridge, 2015). Through the intersectional lens it is recognised that at different times during the interviews and with each different participant, I could be construed as both the insider and/or outsider. Corbin, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) highlight the importance of the space between insider and outsider categories and the importance of being able to occupy both positions. The key consideration becomes the ability to reflect on when and how the subject position of insider and outsider is influencing the direction and outcomes of the research in a way that can distract from the authenticity of the research data collected.

As such during the interviews it was important to reflect on my identity, as being white and middle class when interviewing participants from different ethnic groups. At the same I reflected on the insider characteristics I shared with the participants such as having occupied a middle management position in the HR profession, being a mother and having a similar age to some of the participants. In doing so, it was important to not form assumptions about how the women were perceiving me as an insider or outsider, as this would reinforce some of the binary categorisations of privilege and disadvantaged and powerfulness and powerlessness that different groups are perceived to have.

Taking insider and outsider considerations into account and principles of effective feminist interviewing, the interviews were sought to be conducted in a non-hierarchical and empathy driven manner. This approach is advocated when interviewing participants with diverse background (Kamenou, 2007). In seeking to build a non-hierarchical rapport with the participants, an almost conversational interview approach was adopted, as the interview progressed, to promote an environment where the participants felt comfortable and using their normal discursive practices. Through the topics and issues posed participants were encouraged to discuss specific career events and episodes with key players in their careers to support the participants talking at length and in their natural manner. Using this approach participants would actually recall specific conversations with managers and other key actors that were revealing in relation to the role of discursive power and practices and a reflection of encounters they have experienced in the process of their career management.

As the above discussions have highlighted from an FPDA perspective it is important to seek to capture participants speech in the most natural setting possible and so has tended to favour ethnographic settings whereby the researcher is embedded (Baxter, 2003). As this research was focused at the individual professional level, rather than the experiences of HR professionals in a particular organisation, an embedded ethnographic approach with the researcher adopting the position of observer, was not possible. Focus groups were considered, as this would allow for HR professionals to be engaged in real discursive practices with other members of the profession, so potentially a more natural setting then an interview. However, it was felt that the focus group setting might not support the depth of analysis with each participants and opportunity for every participant to discuss at length their experiences and to reveal the full range of discourses shaping their career management experiences.

In selecting semi-structured interviews over other qualitative methods every effort was made to create a setting that would encourage natural talk about their carer management experiences in-depth, otherwise the authenticity of their discursive practices could be lost. Alvesson and Willmott (2002) in their seminal paper reviewing discourse analysis research in employment studies highlighted when studying careers from a discourse perspective, caution is required that participants are not simply portraying themselves in the best light. In careers studies participants can construct discourses differently, as they do not want the researcher to perceive them as doing less well in their careers. Reflexivity was essential here to continually reflect on how my insider-outsider status, as researcher and having experience in the HR profession was impacting the participants talk.

Another key consideration when conducting the semi-structured interviews was being aware that the participants may present in the interview one way through talk, but act in a different way in the natural setting (Fairclough, 2003), which could impact the validity of the research. Being aware of these issues throughout the interview process was essential and this is why it was important to take time at the start of the process to develop a rapport with the participant and ensure there was lots of space in the interview for participants to provide an in-depth context to their discussions.

5.3 Sampling and recruiting participants

The sampling method employed was purposeful, non-probability sampling. The aim of the research was to focus in-depth on the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession. This research specifically wanted to explore the realities of career management from the intersectional perspective of gender, ethnicity and class in the HR profession, as this is an identified under- researched area. To maintain the poststructuralist understanding of these categories as fluid and non-stable, participants in the research would not be asked specifically the impact of these social categories on their careers, rather they would explore their background and identities in a more fluid manner and without the imposition of social categorisations by the researcher. In the following discussions the two key inclusion criteria for the participants, how participants were selected and recruited, and participants' characteristics table are provided and justified.

Definition of a middle management position

Middle management rather than middle age or mid-career was selected, as the unit as analysis for this research. A main aim of the research was to explore from an intersectional perspective how women progress from or remain in middle management positions within the HR profession. As identified previously in this thesis beyond this point in the HR profession men appear to accelerate despite their minority status. In addition, interest in advancement beyond the middle management position is of significance to provide an intersectional understanding of career management strategies, rather than the current focus on a homogenous norm for female career advancement. Within the HR profession there is a fairly discernible career structure through a series of positions that lead to middle management and then beyond (Personnel Today, 2008).

The influence of what has come to be known as the Ulrich model (1997) over last 20 years on the structure of HR departments in the UK and globally means that job roles in the HR profession can follow a standard development process. The names of actual job positions will vary between organisations and HR departments depending on their size and reach (CIPD, 2015). As such it was expected there would be some variation in the actual job titles of the women involved in the research. Thus, on reviewing the practitioner literature that evaluates the level of seniority of HR jobs roles and definitions in the UK the following inclusion criteria for middle manager in the HR profession was selected. All participants had line management responsibility, were involved in both operational and transactional HR activities, they were responsible for the day to day management of a department and had some degree of autonomy to set workloads for themselves and of those they managed. They also all reported to a Director of HR or a Senior HR Manager depending on the size of the company (XpertHR, 2017).

As per research conducted by the CIPD (2017) at the middle manager level, HR professionals can either occupy a generalist HR role, whereby they have experience and knowledge across the full range or HR activities or they have become a specialist in one of the HR functional areas, such as employee relations. Both HR generalists in middle management and those occupying specialist roles were interviewed. The complexity of the middle manager role is explored in the literature review of this thesis and by outlining the inclusion criteria for participants for this research project, the intention is not to minimize the

diversity of the role but to set to parameters by which participants were selected for this research.

The Level 7 Advanced CIPD qualification (PG Diploma in HRM or MA/MSc HRM)

The second inclusion criteria required that all participants had studied for and achieved a Level 7 Advanced CIPD qualification. This qualification is assumed, as a prerequisite for many middle management and senior management positions in the HR profession. It is considered important in relation to careers in HRM, due to the abstraction penalty to a career when studying for an additional qualification (CIPD, 2017) and due to the requirement to have an Advanced Level 7 CIPD qualification to reach the professional membership grades (identified by the acronym MCIPD). In the participant characteristic table below the time since they completed the qualification was captured. The significance and power of this qualification is revealed in the talk of the participants in the following chapters. Often participants would refer to and repeat '*I am MCIPD*' or '*I have the CIPD*' which is a discursive practice within the profession of equating to be being more professional and potentially powerful, depending on the context.

Attendance at East London CIPD networking events.

The participants were recruited via HR networking events and the professional network of the researcher. It should be highlighted that networking is commonly cited as one of the main career management strategies for advancing or supporting female professional careers (Clarke, 2011). The benefits are primarily perceived as keeping professional knowledge up to date and making wider connections in the profession that could lead to career opportunities. Selecting participants via these means then is significant to note, as it applies that participants will already be engaged (to lesser or greater extent) in career management practices. Both purposeful and snowballing sampling techniques were applied. Participants were contacted at events or subsequently via LinkedIn to discover if they would be interested in taking part in the research project. Through LinkedIn and attendance at events the level and role within the HR profession was evident to the researcher but on contacting participants they were asked if they met the two inclusion criteria, of being in a middle management positions and having completed the CIPD Level 7 Qualification. Following the interviews, a number of participants recommended or suggested someone that could be interviewed in relation to the topic and as such four participants were recruited via snowball sampling. All participants

were provided with a participant's information letter (see Appendix) and consent form which was completed on attendance at the interview.

5.4 Gender, ethnicity and class criteria

A mixed ethnic sample of British women was applied (Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington, 2015). This included Black African (7), Black Caribbean (7) and White (11) women. White women from the traditional middle class were included in the sample. Including participants with power in intersectional studies helps to illuminate how the systems of power and privilege are maintained and avoids the assumption that marginalised positions always mean disadvantage (McBride et al's, 2015: 338). With the emphasis on the socially constructed nature of gender, ethnicity and class and attempts to impose a stable and homogenous order on a complex and fluid social reality was rejected. A key aspect of this research was not to impose researcher led definitions on the social categories of participants. Understanding the discursive practices that maintain the social categories is a powerful tool and is an important aspect of poststructuralist thinking, as too is thinking about ways in which they can be destructed. Deconstructing social categories is an essential aspect of deconstructing how inequality and privilege is maintained (McCall, 2005; 1777). It was important for participants at the start of the interview to self-identify their background in the context of their ethnicity, which could embody culture, religion and nationality amongst other criteria and their class. When the participants were asked to explore aspects of their background that have supported their careers in HR often the participants would describe a combination of ethnicity and class in relation to their background. To illustrate;

> I'm from a rich African culture (…) We didn't have any money or anything growing up. Both my parents worked two jobs. But we didn't want for anything (.) We were surrounded by family and all my cousins.

This description from Suzanne portrays how ethnicity and class are entwined with each other rather than additive. What becomes important from a poststructuralist and intersectional approach was to provide detail and complexity in the way in which all participants are presented and to focus on the ways in which, as a consequence of discursive practices, social categories assigned by them or to them, they are experienced and reproduced (McCall, 2005; 1783). This was also important in the context of how class was experienced and understood

by the participants in the context of their lived experiences. By asking the participants to reflect on aspects of their background at the start of the interview, social clues to their socio-economic background could be gained. At the end of the interview I showed the participants the Savage et al (2013) categories and we discussed, which category they felt they represented. Self-identification was important because, as identified by Savage et al socio-economic group is one the most fluid social categories.

This is revealed in the analysis chapter, as shifting class boundaries had an impact on the participants career management experiences. In terms of the self-identification process some participants would state if they had moved between categories and this is highlighted in the below participant table. If the identification of social-class had been conducted via a more prescriptive means this could have limited the self-expression and identification process and could have prevented the participants discussing these issues in more depth. In this sense the re-articulation or imposition of hegemonic discourses for the different social categorise could have occurred. Hegemonic discourses of social class that create powerful class imagery and hierarchy have the power to control the behaviour and experiences of the participants (Reay, 1998). An expressed aim of this research was to challenge and provide space for alternative discourses to emerge. The broad space and capacity for self-identification was also beneficial in relation to understanding experiences of ethnicity, as many of the British Black-African and British Black-Caribbean participants specially mentioned if they were first generational immigrants to the UK and this is identified in the analysis, as where this was constructed as significant in the women's career journey.

5.5 Participant characteristics table

Pseudonym and age	Ethnicity	Social class/socio economic background	Length in HR	Type of current organisation	HR middle management role
Dee (42)	British Black-African	Middle class	9 Years	Medium sized facilities	HR Manager generalist role
Suzanne (35)	British Black-African	New affluent work	5 years	Large corporate bank	HR Business Analyst
Joy (42)	British with Caribbean	Middle class	11 years	Education	HR Manager generalist role
Elizabeth (49)	British Black-Caribbean.	From traditional working but identifies as new affluent worker	15 years	Small trading company	HR and training manager
Mandy (35)	British Black-African	A new affluent worker	8 years	Education	HR Manager
Aida (37)	British Black-African	New affluent worker. Traditional working class.	9 years	NHS Trust	HR manager

Adriene (41)	British Black-African.	New affluent worker. Traditional working class.	10 years	Medium sized waste management company	HR Business partner
Paula (49)	British Black-Caribbean	New affluent worker from traditional working-class background	11 years	Large government department	HR Business analysis with a remint for employee wellbeing
Estelle (36)	British Black-African.	New affluent worker from traditional working-class background	6 years	Medium sized IT consultancy	HR Manager
Auriella (35)	British Black-African	Middle class	5 years	Banking	HR Business Partner
Krystle (36)	British Black-African	New Affluent worker	5 years	Small start-up tech firm	HR Business Partner
Janet (40)	Black Caribbean	New Affluent worker	10 years	Banking	HR manager
Isobel (36)	Black Caribbean	New affluent worker	5 years	Medium tech company	Talent manager
Susan (42)	Black Caribbean	New affluent worker	8 years	Banking	Employee relations manager

Karen (35)	White British	Traditional working-class background. New affluent worker	9 years	NHS Trust	Manager Employee Relations
Kate (36)	White British	New affluent worker	7 years	NHS Trust	HR manager – generalist
Christine (39)	White British	Middle class	9 years	Food manufacturing	HR manager – generalist
Margaret (50)	White British	Middle class	10 years	Large pharmaceutical	HR Business Partner
Alana (35)	White British	Traditional working-class background. New affluent worker	9 years	Education	HR Manager – generalist
Tina (43)	White British	Traditional working-class background. New affluent worker.	9 years	Police	HR Business Partner
Shauna (35)	White Irish	Traditional working class. New affluent worker	6 years	Government department	HR Business Partner

Cassandra (36)	White British	Middle-class	6 years	Small financial company	HR Manager – generalist
Anna (37)	White British	Middle-class	8 years	Small Investment Bank	HR Business Partner
Ariana (38)	White British	Traditional working class	6 years	Retail	Employee Relations managers
Sue (49)	White British	Traditional working class	13 years	Retail banking	OD Manager
Rebecca (37)	White British.	Traditional working class	9 years	Medium manufacturer and retailer	HR Business partner

5.6 Theoretical saturation point

Twenty-five semi-structured interviews were conducted. From a poststructuralist perspective, theoretical saturation as a concept is somewhat problematic, as the poststructuralist view is knowledge is always contextual, changing and fluid. Instead theoretical saturation was achieved via the possibility to provide an in-depth analysis of the discourses shaping the career management experiences of the women and to make meaningful connections and competing accounts between their talk.

5.7 Age, motherhood and working full-time

Whilst not identified as inclusion criteria, it emerged that all of the participants were between the ages of 34-50, were a mother and working full-time. The age of participants potentially reflects occupying and reaching middle management position. In relation to working full-time ,it is important to highlight that the participants discussed periods of their careers where they have been part-time and the significant discursive power that working 'part-time', 'full-time' and 'being available' plays in the analysis of their talk.

5.8 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were conducting between December 2014 and January 2016. Identifying the location of the interviews is important, as locations are not neutral and is an important part of the research process and social context of the study (Herzog, 2005: 25). It was discussed with the participants where the interviews should take place and where was the most convenient place. The participants opted to either choose meeting at the University of East London or at a quiet café close to the university. The University of East London was the most common location with 15 of the interviews taking place there. Most of the interviews took place in the evening after work. The interview rooms at the university were always secure and confidential.

Three telephone interviews were also held due to issues in trying to meet face to face with the participant. In conducting telephone interview's the experience of the researcher in undertaking the interviews in important (Cassell, 2011). The telephone interviews were the last to be interviewed and as such the researcher was more confident in their approach and had enhanced and developed their questioning style as the interviews had progressed. However, the main difference with telephone interviews is the flexibility afforded to interviewers in being able to adapt their style of questioning to the participants on the basis of their visual ques and clues (Bryman and Bell, 2015). It was essential therefore that in these interviews to be actively listening and allowing for pauses and probing the emotions that participants were experiencing during the course of the interview.

5.9 Setting up the interviews

Prior to meeting participants for the interview, they were emailed the Information Sheet (see Appendix) outlining the nature of the research and they were asked to read through the consent form. At the start of the interview they were asked if they understood everything in the information sheet and consent form and if they had any questions before signing the consent form. The way in which the interview would be conducted, including how a series of topics would be explored, was explained to every participant. Sometimes at the start of the interview there would be what could be considered an informal ice-breaking conversation whereby rapport was developed between the researcher and the participant. Topics would be discussed not related to the interview and without being recorded. These conversations did support the development of rapport and for the participant to start to freely talk. This ultimately supported a more naturalised environment and the development of the participants' discursive practices.

5.10 The interviews

The interviews lasted between one hour and two and half hours. Approval from the participants that the interviews could be recorded was achieved with every participant and it was explained that notes would be taken during the interview to record body language and physical cues from the participants. The topics guide was employed but beyond the opening questioning the structure of the interview flowed in accordance with the direction in which the interview was taken by the participants. An open-ended questioning approach was

adopted to encourage participants to talk at length in relation to their career management experiences, in order for authentic discourse and discursive practices to emerge.

There are some specific techniques that qualitative researchers have employed in relation to interviewing participants about their careers. These include looking at key career events or actors and specific career conversations that participants have experienced in relation to their careers. Some of these approaches were adopted in the interview and when participants discussed events or other people, that had been significant to their careers, they were encouraged to speak in more depth through the use of probing questions. This means that often participants discussed actual conversations that took place with others about their career management and revealed relational discourses and discursive practices shaping those conversations.

Related to this discussion, whilst a conversational style was important in the context of rapport building and I was aware not to move in a 'career conversation'. This is an identified mode of development for individual careers and used by career counsellors. During the interviews when participants were discussing a negative career experience they would seek advice in relation to how they could have handled the situation differently or ask questions around what I would suggest for future career development. In being conscious of the need to be empathetic and avoid causing damage to the participants through the research process by surfacing negative career experiences that felt unresolved, it was also important that I did not move into 'expert' mode. This would have created division between myself and the participants and reduced the likelihood of naturally occurring talk. In this respect a hierarchy would enter the relationship and the focus would shift to the advice being provided rather than the participants experiences.

5.11 Ending the interview

The above discussions highlight the importance of ending the interviews appropriately. As some of the interviews did reveal some difficult career experiences and events it was important to remain neutral in the actual interview but after the interview it was possible to offer to some career management resources that the participants could access for further advice. The details of additional support services were explored by the researcher in advance of conducting the interviews and once the interview had been finished and the recording device had been turned off there was the opportunity to discuss with the participant options

such as mentoring or other network opportunities. This is an important commitment that feminist researchers make in relation to conducting the interviews in a supportive and empathetic manner and to ensure no harm is caused to participants as a result of taking part in the research. It was important these discussions took place after the interview so they did not dominate or effect the dynamics of the relationship between the interviewee and researcher with the latter becoming expert. It should be noted however, that sometimes during these conversations the discussion evolved in a way that was potentially revealing for the analysis so I asked the participant if I could turn the recorder back on and for us to discuss the issues for the purposes of the interview. This occurred on five occasions and each time the participant indicated they were happy for the device to be turned back on. If the participant had said no then these extra discussions were not included in the analysis. All participants were asked in closing the interviews if they felt we had discussed everything that was significant in the context of their career management experiences in their middle management position. This final question allowed the interview to close with greater confidence that all key issues shaping their career management experiences had been covered.

5.12 Analysis process

Transcription and denotative first stage of the analysis

 After the interviews ended they were transcribed by the researcher, as soon as possible. The interviews were recorded digitally and the recordings were played back on the recording device. As the interviews were being transcribed verbatim a cross check to the notes that the researcher took at the time of the interviews were also reflected on to compare the physical ques and body language of the participant. The transcription process started the analysis phase of the research, as through listening, re-listening and writing down the 'talk' of the participants the role of discourses could start to be understood. The process of transcription and re-listening immediately after the interviews were completed also supported the development of the interviews going forward, as it became clear when participants were using common, competing and alternative discourses to explore their experiences of the career management. However, the philosophical grounding of the research meant that complexity and ambiguity in the women's career management experiences were sought, so it was important not to shoe-horn or guide the subsequent interviews in the direction of preidentified discourses to avoid a loss of authenticity and the opportunity to expose competing discourses.

Baxter (2008) identified this first stage of analysis, as capturing the verbal descriptions of events or experiences in a denotative way so that direct and explicit meanings are presented. It was important to transcribe the interviews verbatim and include my questions and responses and all pauses and body language, as this all formed part of the discursive process. In order to identify discourses and discursive patters it was important that the participants talked in detail in relation to their career management experiences and the issues shaping it. This highlights why it was important for the interviewees to have had the space to discuss their experiences at length during the interview stage, through open questioning. It was important to become familiar with the content of the interviews and the denotative meaning before moving on to the second stage of the analysis, which is how to move denotive descriptions through to connotative analysis. The denotive analysis was important and add values because;

> '…it provides a linguistic analysis of a speech encounter which attends to the obvious, common-sense meanings within any interaction, and therefore form an apparently uncontroversial basis from which a theoretically driven interpretation can emerge' (Baxter, 2007: 75).

It was at this stage of the analysis that some of the hegemonic discourse statements, patterns and expressions were identified. To illustrate, one of the first discourse patterns to emerge was talk around the credibility of the HR function and needing to be close to the business and the impact of this on the participants' careers. This demonstrates that even at the denotative stage interpretations by the researcher were already taking place. In this respect my focus and attention to key aspects of the participants' talk were already taking place. It should be acknowledged here that this was *my* interpretation of the interview data and different researchers may produce a different reading and identification of discourses that were significant. From a poststructuralist perspective knowledge and knowledge creation is always fluid and contextually relevant and shaped by the values and subject position of the researcher.

5.13 Identifying discourses and discursive patterns

A number of over-arching hegemonic discourses that were common in the talk across the career management experiences of the participants were identified. This helped to structure and organise the analysis and achieve the aim of exposing the role of dominant and alternative discourses in the career management experiences of women in the HR profession. The second key step was to demonstrate how intertextuality occurred, whereby competing discourses work in combination or tension with hegemonic discourse. The aims of this research were particularly interested in identifying competing discourses from intersectional localities, as these are the sites of struggle and resistance. By highlighting competing discourses this helped to expose hegemonic discourses and reveal the space in which transformatory change can occur for groups in the HR profession that are often silenced and marginalised. The aim here was not to seek to replace grand discourses but instead to reveal how competing discourses can provide resistance and alternative career outcomes between women in different intersectional subjective positions.

In explaining how discourses and discursive practices (social practices produced by discourse) where identified in the conative analysis it is important to revisit here the definition of discourse commonly favoured by feminist poststructuralists. Grounded in the thinking of Foucault discourses where understood to be; '…practices that systematically form the objective of what they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49) and are a form of social and ideological practice (Baxter, 2007: 7).

In this respect statements become the building blocks of discourses that are repeatedly referred to through institutions and social relations and shape the behaviour of individuals.

> 'We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formulation (…discourse) is made up of a limited number of statement for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined' (Foucault, 1972: 117).

A poststructuralist analysis then focuses on identifying the conditions that create common and competing discourse. Important also were the silences that occurred in discursive practice of the participants, as silence reveal how discourses can limit what is possible or impossible to say (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). From a poststructuralist/Foucauldian discourse analysis

perspective discursive practices or statements can be investigated in two main ways. Via archaeology, which seeks to isolate the history of the rules regulating certain discourse and genealogy that seeks to understand the forces and relations of power that are connected to discursive practices (Alvesson and Karreman, 2002). Therefore, it becomes essential to understand the historical, social and economic conditions of the given research context. In the context of this research the historical evolution of the HR profession became important in identifying and exploration discourses and discursive practices, as did the gendered processes that have shaped the feminisation of the profession. In addition, given the significance of ethnicity and class to the research understanding discourses in the historical context of post-colonial Britain and the class-based systems was important.

 Another essential aspect in being able to analyse the text to reveal discourses was having an ethnographic grounding in the community of practice supports, as the researcher did here, through their professional work. Being familiar with the profession and being around people working in HR regularly helped with the identification of the discourses that were common within the profession. Whilst this was important in identifying discourses within an FPDA analysis, discourses are always plural and competitive within a given context (Baxter, 2007: 8) so it was important not to rely on presumed knowledge of discourses in the profession that would automatically be significant here. In addition, due to the intersectional perspective it was also important to consider how gendered, ethnic and social class discourses intertwined with dominant professional, career and organisational discourses in shaping the social realities of female careers in the profession.

 With these perspectives in mind and by answering the following questions, as identified by Baxter (2007: 138) it was possible to locate discourses in the participants' talk:

1. Which words, phrases and terms are repeatedly used and in which contexts
2. Which themes, issues and preoccupations were common to all transcripts
3. What are the contradictions, oppositions and competing viewpoints (Baxter, 2007: 138).

 These questions supported uncovering what the rules were in the context of the participants' talk, which statements were accepted as meaningful and shaped action and career management. Following this approach three hegemonic discourses were identified that were

common across all of the interviews and shaped in different ways the career management experiences of the participants. These three HRM hegemonic discourses were common and reoccurring but what is important to stress that whilst they were common and reoccurring across the transcripts the way in which they shaped experiences varied significantly and there was variability across participants and even within speaker's accounts. Exploring the role of hegemonic and competing discourses and discursive practices from an intersectional perspective of gender, ethnicity and class meant that the simple dualism of the dominant discourse belonging to the oppressors and oppositional discourses belong to the oppressed was avoided. Instead what is foregrounded is how positions of power in relation to career management opportunities and experiences are continually negotiated through situated discourses (Baxter, 2007: 71).

 The aim then in exploring the role of hegemonic discourse was to reveal the range of competing discourses that existed and shifted the participants from powerful to powerless positions in their career management experiences at the middle management level, which would reveal barriers and enablers to progressing upwards in the profession. This was an important poststructuralist feminist aim of the research, which supports the position that speakers are implicated in negotiating how they position themselves and are positioned through discourse in the context of their career outcomes (Baxter, 2007). The intercategorical intersectional lens revealed how some women can be more powerfully positioned in relation to their careers through discursive practice that could resist hegemonic discourses and how through the use of competing discourses they were better placed to benefit from their experience, interests and goals.

  Other discourses that emerged from the participants talk, included professional, organisational and career management discourse that were common across the transcripts but also a number were only common to smaller groups of the participants and reflected shared aspects of their intercategorical background. To illustrate, the terms 'safe' or 'comfortable' were repeated by some of the participants who had identified disadvantage based on their ethnicity previously in their careers. The terms became loaded and acted as discourse, in the sense that it effected their social realities about not wanting to move out of their current positions, which felt 'safe' from discriminatory practices taking place elsewhere. Other discourses were related to discourse of 'doing more with less' and financial budgetary constraint, which has become a common feature across the sectors in the UK. In this respect

understanding how hegemonic professional discourses could work in combination with or in tension with other discourses revealed how the women in the research could discursively position themselves in positions of power or disadvantage in relation to their careers, depending on the context.

As such the analysis chapters were structured and organised around three professional hegemonic discourses identified but the focus of presenting the discourses identified, was on interdiscursivity. This means one discourse was often challenged, evolving and adjusting in the context of other discourses. To illustrate, the following example reveals how during the analysis even within one speech event discourses can be inflected by other discourses. This could be called a discourse map in relation to how competing discourse can work in tension and in opposition with hegemonic discourse (Baxter, 2007). This extract from one of the interviews reveals how the hegemonic HRM discourse of business partnering and people management activities that are perceived as 'best for business' became inflected with cost saving and a racialised discourse that shaped their career management experience. The discussion below is in the context of a senior manager not paying for her to study her professional qualification in HR.

> I understood their decision making (.) I think at that time they didn't want me leaving the business once a week to study. There was so much going on at work then (.) and they needed us close to the business. Then there was the money. My predecessors tended to do the qualification and run (…) what upset me was how they handled it. (…) My manager never actually told me face to face why they wouldn't fund it. When I knew they funded other people. I had to chase and chase even to get a response to my email. So, in the end I just signed up and paid myself and then she sent an email. Saying something about budgets (...) Which is fair enough. But I don't think everyone is treated like that (.)

This example reveals how it was possible for dominant discourse to become intersected with competing discourses jockeying for position (Baxter, 2007) in relation to the complex ways in which discourses can shape the career management experiences of women in the HR profession. The example also reveals how discourses can occur simultaneously or evolve within a short section of text to change the subject position and experience of the speaker. The example also highlights how it was important to identify the role of gender, ethnicity and

social class discourses and how they became intertwined with dominant and other competing discourses.

As explored in the literature review gendered, ethnic and social class discourses have played a significant role in exploring the unequal outcomes in employment and professional life and were significant to this study. Essentialist interpretations concerning gender, ethnicity (although more commonly race) and social class fuel stereotypical discourses and can become infused with other discourses. To illustrate; a theme in the transcripts was '*The girl from HR*' this inferred the lower status of the profession and at the same time an attempt to position women working in the profession as lower status. Another theme was '*twin set and pearls*' to describe a gendered middle-class ideal HR professional and also referred to how the profession can be rule bound and inflexible. The analysis chapter that follows explores this interdiscursivity in more depth and the full range of discourses, in tension and combination, that participants from an intercategorical lens used to construct and negotiate their career management experiences and legitimised the outcomes.

5.14 Ethics

In addition to gaining ethical consent for the research from the University of East London (UEL) Ethics Committee (see Appendix) and abiding by their expectations for ethical rigour, the research also conformed to a range of ethical principles inherent in feminist qualitative research (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002atr). During the process of undertaking this thesis I changed location of PhD registration and as such received as second ethical approval. As the following discussions and previous discussions in this chapter have highlighted the main ethical considerations focused on informed consent, safeguarding the confidentiality of the data and the participants privacy, avoiding and minimising harm to the participants and being sensitive to conducting research with diverse participants (Gilbert, 2008: 153).

As a starting point informed consent was sought from participants via the completion of the consent form. But a standard in feminist interviewing is that informed consent is viewed, as a process throughout the research (Ellis, 2009). Therefore, the purpose of the research and their role in the process was discussed with participants throughout the research process and if at any stage they want to withdraw how this would be possible. The participants did ask what would happen to the interviews data post the use in a PhD. We then discussed the informed

consent form and if how they were consenting for their data to be used for potential future publications. As a feminist researcher I was conscious of this dynamic between myself and the participants, in the sense of me 'wanting' something from them that could ultimately be of benefit to my career. This was an important reflexivity point and highlighted the importance of explaining to participants their right to withdraw and the wider aims of the research in relation to benefits to the profession and career management from the research, beyond just the achievement of PhD and potential future publication.

Anonymity and confidentiality for participants was maintained via a number of means during the research, including booking private rooms at the university for the interviews, storing data securely in accordance with data protection laws and using pseudonyms for participants and anyone mentioned in their interviews. This latter point of using pseudonyms also served an aim of the feminist research, which was not to de-personalise the data and the participants.

Being sensitive to the ownership and authenticity of the data and how it was presented becomes particularly important in the contexts of conducting research across gender, ethnicity and class. Applying the use of discourse analysis, supported the need when researching diverse groups to account for he historical, social, economic and geographical context and location of the research. By accounting for the role of these factors and applying an understanding of sexism, racism and classism that takes place in organisations in the UK it was possible to be sensitive to the specific contexts of the participants and avoid them being objectified (Kamenou, 2007). The poststructuralist lens of the research also supported an in-depth consideration of my identity, as white middle class researcher and the potential impact this had from an ethical perspective, as being an outsider to some of the research population. The poststructuralist position adopted addressed the ethics of a white researcher interpreting through analysis the experiences of other ethnic groups, as categories are deconstructed and fluidity of subject positions is prioritized over the binary categories of white/black. As explored above the emphasis was in capturing the shifting nature of power that existed within the women' careers and between the researcher and the participants avoids presenting certain groups, as victims and essentially always less powerful.

Another key focus in the research, which was of particular significance when interviewing people from diverse backgrounds, was that all encounters with participants were conducted

with empathy and any potential harm that could be experienced was minimised. This involved researching in advance of the interview's sources of career support that the participants could access if the discussions moved in a particular direction. The preceding discussions highlighted the importance of exploring additional support at the end of the interview. During the interviews an empathetic approach to the participants was maintained in relation to my interviewing style and when participants were discussing difficult career experiences. The aim of the feminist research is to not to objectify the participants so in this respect closeness to the participant in relation to supportive encounters is valued, as important. Withstanding this was I was conscious during the interviews of being supportive but trying to maintain a level of neutrality that did not encourage them to over or under exaggerate their accounts. As already discussed at length in this thesis the role of reflexivity is intricately embedded in the poststructuralist and intersectional lens and supported maintenance of the ethical principles in this research.

5.15 Maintaining reflexivity

As alluded to throughout this chapter reflexivity was embedded into every stage of the analysis and was an essential part of the research design. The feminist poststructuralist position of the research highlights how during the interviews and stages of the research process positions of power were constantly shifting between the participant and the researcher (Baxter, 2002). This relates to discussions of the existence of an insider and outsider dichotomy, which was experienced here as entirely fluid between the two positions. Depending on the context of a particular stage of an interview I be could viewed, as being in or alongside the research population due to one aspect of my perceived identity but outside simultaneously or at a different stage of the interview. This related to how by values, perception and even social categories shifted during the undertaking of the research meaning that insider and outsider dichotomy would be too simplistic here. To illustrate, there were many times when I was experienced, as an insider as a consequence of my time spent in the profession. Participants would often make comets such as; *'you know how it is working in the HR profession' or 'I mean you know what its like. You've been there.'* In this sense the participants perceived I would understand the discourse and the purpose and explanation of it could be assumed.

One example of where outsider status became apparent was with one interviewee who spoke about how unconfident she was in her spoken English, despite being in the UK for over 20 years. It felt during the interview that she was very deliberate and conscious in what was saying and often checking with me in relation to *'was that what you wanted?' 'could you understand what I was saying?".* I perceived my status as academic and white middle class as accentuating her concern for language ability and the interview did not flow in the same way others did and was the shortest interview. Attempts to reassure the participant and to break down hierarchical barriers did not seem to work, as answers were much shorter.

5.16 Evaluating the research design

There is no consensus on how qualitative research should be evaluated or demonstrate rigour (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Given the different theoretical and epistemological positions adopted in qualitative research and varying definitions of what rigour entails, this perhaps is unsurprising (Anderson, 2017). The traditional measures for the quality of research validity, reliability and generalisability have been questioned in relation to their appropriateness for qualitative research. To evaluate qualitative research projects these key quality terms have been adapted (Bryman and Bell, 2015: 394). The following discussions, in relation to evaluating the research design adopted in this thesis, accounts for qualitative evaluative concepts, considered in the context of a feminist poststructuralist study.

5.17 Validity as credibility in qualitative research and implications for poststructuralist feminist research

A key concept in evaluating research is validity, which refers to if the researcher achieves measuring what they set out to measure (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The inclusion of the word 'measure' is of course problematic for a feminist qualitative researcher, as it implies a degree of objectification and quantification of women, which historically has not desirable within feminist methodologies (Cook and Fonow, 1986). External validity also implies the degree to which the study can be replicated by other researchers (Walker, James and Brewer, 2017), which is problematic from a poststructuralist perspective whereby knowledge and experience of the social world is perceived as contextually specific, fluid and constantly changing (Baxter, 2007). There is no perceived advantage of replicating this feminist poststructuralist study and in hoping to achieve to the same results. However, of course it is important that

rigour was demonstrated in the research to support the credibility and authenticity (Anderson, 2017) of the research findings and from a feminist perspective so that no harm or negative impacts were experienced by the participant, as a consequence of taking part in the research.

In qualitative research the term credibility is often used to denote the trustworthiness of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2015: 396). One of the ways in which credibility is enhanced is by providing the participants the opportunity to scrutinize the research findings as means of checking representation and understanding of the social world. This process is sometimes referred to as 'member checking' or 'participant verification' (Choi and Roulston, 2015) but was not adopted here, as it is argued it does not sit with the poststructuralist grounding of the research. I have expressed in this thesis that the analysis undertaken is my interpretation of the research data and the notion of capturing a precise participant reality, which is fixed in time and can be verified is not an ambition of poststructuralist research. It is argued that credibility was built into the research design by acknowledging this perspective from the start and also building in extensive reflexivity so that my interpretation of the research findings understood (Baxter, 2007).

Another way of building credibility into the research findings is for them to be verified by members of the wider population or social group (Bryman and Bell, 2015) in this case the HR profession. The researcher did present the emerging findings of the research project at both practitioner and academic conferences and the discussions with attendees did in go some way authenticating the findings of the research. Practitioners indicated to the researcher that the discourses and experiences emerging resonated with their careers. In addition, as explored previously in this thesis the importance of being close to the social setting of the research and being exposed routinely to common discourses (Baxter, 2007), as the researcher was to the HR profession in this instance supports the credibility and authenticity of the findings.

These discussions relate to how the named discourses in this thesis can hold up to scrutiny from inside and outside of the specific discipline (Sunderland, 2004). At academic conferences in related fields the emerging findings were discussed and debated with academics and could be defended. The ability to do this was supported by the naming of discourses grounded in a historical and ethnographic understanding of the profession and also in recognising the plurality of discourses that were in use and shaping experience (Baxter, 2017). Seeking to present the complexity of discursive practices, as the analysis chapters

focus upon, is an important criteria in evaluating the credibility of qualitative research (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). The poststructuralist grounding of this research perceives the social word as complex, fluid and changing, so any simplistic presentation of dominant discourses would have undermined and devalued this position (Baxter, 2007).

5.18 Generalisability as transferability in feminist poststructuralist research

 In understanding the social world as fluid and complex, the possibility of generalisations to the wider population was not an expressed aim of this research. However, as a feminist poststructuralist piece of work there are transformational goals to the research, which are different to the emancipatory goals in other feminist thinking (Baxter, 2007). The transformatory goals sought here concern exposing the hegemonic discourses that shape the experiences of women in the profession and to foreground competing discourses and sites of resistance from groups within the profession that have been silenced or marginalised. In doing so, the need for greater nuance in career management advice and guidance and the diversity of career management experiences within the profession needs to be recognised. Therefore, in order to achieve these aims any form of statistical generalisation is rejected but rather the use of thick descriptions and authentic accounts of the use of discourses in the career management experiences of the participants was required (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). This enhances how the final research outcomes can be read and some consideration of transferability to other contexts could be made, to form the basis of bottom- up social action (Anderson, 2017).

5.19 Dependability as reliability in feminist poststructuralist research

Dependability is perceived as more desirable in qualitative research, as the quantitative measure of reliability assumes a fixed and single account of the social world (Bryman and Bell, 2015: 395). Dependability can refer to the stability of the findings over time; the consistency of the findings to accepted standards for particular research designs and philosophies and confirmability of the findings, as being grounded in the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A means for ensuring dependability in qualitative research is through an 'auditing' approach to the collection and maintenance of the data (Zamawe, 2015). Arguably the desirability of the use of 'auditing' language is problematic from a feminist perspective.

Some caution is required here given the philosophical position of the work, as an 'auditing' discourse has strong managerialist and natural sciences connotations that are commonly rejected by feminists (Davis, 2003). Therefore, the conditions of auditing could be understood to be gendered and as simply another means of feminist knowledge creation being judged by masculine ideals. A condition of adopting an auditing approach is also a powerful discourse in the context of controlling, measuring and objectifying women and their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, whilst the researcher adopted a responsible, honest and organised approach to understanding, storing and writing up the research findings the terminology and desirability of the language of the auditing is rejected.

To maintain this position the approach adopted in the analysis was to focus on staying close to the data and rejecting an objective position through the use of reflexivity (Baxter, 2017). This still involved the careful documenting and storing of all records associated with the research, such as participants consent forms. This also meant collecting and storing research data and analysis in efficient and organised ways. This can be assisted through Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS), such as Nvivo, which can act as a data storage and analysis tool (Zamawe, 2015). For this research the Microsoft desktop applications of Excel, Access and One Note were selected for the data storage, recording of notes and analysis process over the use of a specialist QDAS. This was primarily, as the key functionality of software such as Nvivo is its capacity to count within particular themes or to identify the frequency of a coded topic (Welsh, 2002). It was felt this was less suitable for a discourse analysis, where there is already a risk in this type of analysis to revert to a thematic or coding based approach (Fairclough, 2013). In using QDAS this could have inadvertently encouraged a coding process because it is relatively easy to do so through the software (Wels, 2002). The ability to elicit meaning from the text is more difficult to do with QDAS and would be problematic for identifying discourses (Welsh, 2002). As such it was also decided that the Microsoft applications provided adequate storage, note taking and comparability functions to manage the research data and analysis process.

In sum, all qualitative analysis and research is a complex process of understanding, judgement and evaluation (Fairclough, 2003: 11), which is why evaluating qualitative research is equally complex. In the context of poststructuralist feminist research employing discourse analysis there are additional considerations that needed to be explored in the context of the desirability of 'traditional' measures of validity, reliability, generalisability and

objectivity, as they have been here. Within a feminist poststructuralist framework it is implied that analysis will be value laden and exposed through reflexivity. This interpretive function should be welcomed rather than disguised under any pretence of the possibility or desirability of objectivity, which from this world view is not possible (Baxter, 2007: 76). Another key evaluative criteria for feminist research is to ensure that that no harm was caused to the participants, as a consequence of undertaking the research (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2015). The ethical considerations of the research were paramount to ensure the research was conducted in an empathetic and supportive manner and at no stage in the process were the participants objectified, as detailed in this chapter.

5.20 Limitations of the research

 Having explored how the research can be evaluated attention now turns to the limitations of the research. The following discussions will be explored in the context of the intersectional lens and the feminist poststructuralist philosophical grounding of the research. Evaluating and exploring the limitations of the research design does potentially expose other ways of doing the research or doing research differently but this still needs to take in account the philosophical grounding of the research and the research question and objectives of the research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). As such the final discussion in this chapter exploring the limitations of the research design, supports the reflection on the research choices and decisions made.

 When adopting intersectional research, it was important to identify and specify the precise way in which it has been applied in the research, as it has labelled a travelling concept and understood in multiple ways (Salem, 2016). The decision to apply intersectional analysis was formed from a recognition within the current HR career management literature and experiences of women reaching the top of the profession has not adequately addressed the diversity of female experience. The poststructuralist lens of the research also supported applying an intersectional lens, as both view social categories with scepticism in relation to how effectively they can represent the social world. Both have a preference for deconstructing social categories and understanding individual subject positions as fluid and multiple, context specific and non-fixed (Davis, 2008).

The aim in applying the intercategorical intersectional perspective was to understand how the social categories can be deconstructed and constructed through discourses in the context of the women's career management experiences and also to emphasise how the categories are fluid rather than additive in nature. Avoiding an additive approach to representing social categories addressed a commonly perceived limitation of intersectional research (Hancock, 2007). However, in selecting gender, ethnicity and social class, as the main focus in relation to the subject positions of the women's experiences this had the potential of ignoring other categories of age, nationality and sexuality that could have been significant, which is a potential limitation of the research. Gender, ethnicity and class were selected over other social categories, such as disability, sexual orientation and so on, as these social categories create enduring labour market disadvantage (Kirton and Greene, 2016) and are under researched in the context of the HR profession.

A main critique of intersectionality is the way in which the list of difference can be endless and how do researchers know they are not ignoring a particular facet of identity that is important (Ludvig, 2006). The approach adopted here was to encourage participants to self-define their ethnicity and class by exploring their background in a broad way. At no stage of the interviews or analysis were social categories imposed on the participants so that participants could foreground characteristics that they perceived as important. The participants discursive practice in relation to describing their subject positions revealed how the participants experience, negotiate and understand and the imposition of these. In doing so, it was also important to encourage participants to reflect on how subject positions change and were fluid at different stages of their careers and of course during the process of the interviews, which is reflected on in the reflexivity discussions in this chapter.

As capturing the participants in their full complexity and emphasising portraying their experiences in their natural settings is significant to feminist poststructuralism and does draw attention to the potential limitations of using semi-structured interviews, as capturing the natural talk of the participants. An example of this was what would happen after the recording device was switched off. The tone of participants language would change to more informal or relaxed even when discussing things that were said in the interviews. Sometimes these discussions would develop in such a way I would ask if I could turn the device back on as what they were discussing was relevant to the process. The incidents where this occurred

the participants were happy for the interviews to continue and the device to be switched back on, which supported the authenticity of the findings.

To minimise the issues relating to an 'unnatural' interview setting this chapter has explored how the interviews were conducted in such a manner, as to encourage the participants to feel as comfortable as possible so that naturally occurring discursive talk could start to emerge. An alternative method could have been observation of career development events, such as networking occasions, as this would have captured participants in a natural setting. However, there are limitations to this approach of overt observations as the presence of the researcher can also impede naturally occurring talk (Martinko and Gardner, 1985). Given the concerns of the level of discourse produced in an interview or when being observed compared to everyday life, poststructuralist feminist discourse studies have tended to lend themselves to fully ethnographic studies were the researcher is embedded in a community for a period of time (Batxer, 2017). Given the constraints on the researcher time through their paid employment this was not possible here but potentially a consideration for future work.

5.21 Chapter summary

In applying the principles of FPDA and an intercategorical intersectional lens to the analysis of the interview data the aim was not to represent and understand the data in structured opposites or oppositional pairs, such as male/female experiences and black/white experiences (Baxter, 2008). The emphasis was on highlighting the ambiguities, variations and vulnerabilities and where participants were disenfranchised and franchised in their career management experiences. In conducting the analysis in this way it avoided groups being polarised as villains or victims and provided space for alternative discourse to emerge. The aim was to highlight how women from within and across different ethnic and class groups experience the social world in complex and multi-faceted ways. In acknowledging nuance and shade, commonality and difference within the discourses shaping career management experiences, the opportunity arises for career management guidance and advice within the profession to be more appropriately tailored to the realities of a diverse professional group. In this respect when analysing the text, the aim was to identify when the use of discourses were shifting subject positions between powerfulness and powerlessness or potential privilege of disadvantage in relation to their career management experience. This allowed for diverse accounts of experiences and resisted the provision of a single line of argument or closure in

the context of the women's career management experiences. This approach also ensured the ethical treatment of the participants and avoiding objectifying or presenting marginalised voices, as victims.

CHAPTER 6 Exploring the role of dominant commercially oriented professional discourses - *how 'being commercial' shapes the career management experiences of women in middle management HR roles at the intersection of gender, ethnicity and class*

6.1 Introduction

The main discursive and interdiscursive career management experiences of the twenty-five HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class are presented in three chapters in order to demonstrate how they address the over-arching research question and research objectives of the thesis, which are;

How do dominant professional and gendered discourses within the HR profession shape the career management experiences of female middle managers at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class?

RO 1 To explore the role of dominant, commercially orientated HR professional discourses on the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 2 To explore how gendered careerist and motherhood discourses shape the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 3 To examine the role of dominant managing diversity discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

RO 4 To explore the role of ethical and sustainable HR discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

The first finding and analysis chapter addresses RO 1 and explores the role of the dominant commerciality professional discourse and the impact of this on the women's career management experiences at the intersect of gender, class and ethnicity. In the second findings chapter gendered careerist and motherhood discourses are examined through the intersectional lens in the context of how they impact their career management experiences and decisions to address RO 2. The final findings chapter explores the interdiscursivity which

exists between dominant managing diversity and ethical and sustainable HR professional discourses and the impact of this on the career management experiences of the women at the intersectional lens and thus addressing RO 3 and 4. In each of the chapters the opportunity to expose alternative discourses at these intersectional localities provides the context and space for different understandings and potential solutions for more equitable outcomes in careers in the HR profession. The research also aims to identify how competing discourses position speakers as powerful, powerless or a combination of both in relation to their career management experiences. Whilst these three overarching discursive themes help to organise and present the participants discursive practices and how they shaped their career management experiences against the research objectives, another key aim of the research is to understand the way in which dominant discourses interdiscursively combine and compete with other professional, organisational and career discourses, which is also emphasised in the analysis chapters.

6.2 Being commercial and credible – how HR middle managers develop social capital with senior managers through the intersectional lens

The following analysis explores the way in which the dominant 'being commercial' discourse shapes the discursive practices of the women through the intersectional lens and the impact on their ability to develop social capital for career gains. It was common practice amongst the women to discursively construct '*being credible*', as a barrier that needed to be achieved in order to be taken seriously by senior business leader. As such being credible in the business was often discursively practiced in terms of what they could '*offer*' or deliver for other managers in terms of meeting their commercial goals*;*

> What managers want from us is to help them get back to their day job, as quickly as possible. And I think if you want to build trust and credibility with them (.) you just have to accept that. So, if that means holding their hand through a disciplinary then you do it. (Tina (43), White British, Traditional working-class background and now identifies as new affluent worker, police, HR Business Partner)

> The only way to build credibility is to show you can deliver. Give the business what they want. Whether it's turning a job vacancy around quickly or helping them manage

an absence problem (.) Anything that makes their life easier (…). (Susan (42), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Banking, Employee relations manager)

The participants construct their interactions with senior leaders and other managers within gendered rules whereby HR is constructed in a servicing capacity. In some ways commercial credibility sought to be achieved through diminishing the strategic focus and emphasis by focusing on the more transactional or 'day-to-day HR activities', which could be perceived as lower status. As evident here the Ulrichisation of the HR profession sought to distance middle managers from transactional HRM but in reality, this remains part of their role and is considered essential for building credibility with the wider business.

Transactional activities were also discursively constructed in gendered terms. The discourses of 'holding hands' and 'doing' in relation to 'women's work' was a feature of their talk. Doing elements of the dirty work for business was constructed in a taken for granted way for the majority of the women, in order to establish rapport with the business, even with the intention from this position of being able to focus on 'strategic activities'. However, there was also a recognition that the benefits of the approach could be problematic in terms of career gains;

> We're never going to be seen as credible because a lot of HR people are just doing what the business asks (.) whether its right or wrong or from a highly administrative place. In investment banks that means keeping crap away from the business. (Auriella (35), British Black-African, Middle class, Banking, HR Business Partner_

> I have to say (.) that being very honest (.) senior people in director level roles are predominately men probably because they *don't* have the hands on practical HR skills and experience. The women in those roles they will have those practical hands on skills, as they have gone through the ranks. (Christine (39), White British, Middle class, Food manufacturing, HR manager generalist role)

> Men don't tend to get their hand dirty in the day to day things (.) That's why you see them at the top.

(Paula (49), British Black-Caribbean, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Large government department, HR Business analysis with a remint for employee wellbeing)

The findings suggest a recognition that doing transactional work in the long term may not be beneficial for social capital gains, as there are gender differences. In addition, the discursive practices of the women suggest that the ability for them to build social capital gains with senior managers depends, to a significant degree to the extent to which the HR function was seen, as a strategic resource within the organisation;

I was just seen as the girl from HR who sorted out the security passes. Because I was expected to do that too [laughs]. HR was seen as some sort of extension of facilities in that company. So, I tried to make some head way with senior managers but it was impossible. They weren't ready for that sort of HR. (Shauna (35), White Irish, Traditional working class. New affluent worker, Government department, HR Business Partner)

Sometimes you have to accept that they are not going to change. The last company I worked for had really archaic policies. It was having a really bad impact on employees. The culture was terrible. I tried to work with them but at the end of the day they didn't see how HR could add value. (Dee (42), British Black- Africa, Middle class, Medium sized facilities, HR Manager generalist role)

The absence of strategic HR creates another source of discursive tension amongst the participants and impacts their capacity for social capital gains and network building;

I've got two degree in HR! Some days I wandered why I bothered. Some companies like my last job will get you doing anything
(Krystle (36), British Black-African, New Affluent worker, Small start-up tech firm, HR Business Partner)

In terms of the kind of HR you are going to do (.) This will come down to your relationship with your managers. Some of them are more bought-in to what HR can do (.) strategically (.) And some will expect you to do all the running. (Shauna (35),

White Irish, Traditional working class. New affluent worker, Government department, HR Business Partner

How relationships are then built and developed with managers was discussed by the participants and there was an assumption that this was easier for some women than others. Margaret discussed how she found assimilating into the expectations and relationships with senior managers at a company was relatively straightforward;

> I came to the profession late so most people in senior management are my peers. These are people I would socialise with. It's been one of the reasons I was able to move quickly in my career. (Margaret (50), White British, Middle Class, Large pharmaceutical, HR Business Partner)

In this context, from her position social capital gains came easily within the workplace. The intersectional lens can provide additional insights into how women can experience feeling 'othered' in the context of the dominant elite cultures. The following quote from Karen reveals how having started, as an auxiliary in the hospital and working her way up into a middle management HR position, social class remained significant in shaping relationships with senior manager in the organisation;

> I started here as an auxiliary (…) I guess it is something I am aware of particularly when I am talking with Doctors. Obviously, they are highly qualified and come from a certain class. I have my Masters now. But I don't feel confident telling them. (Karen (35), White British, Traditional working-class background, New affluent worker years, NHS Trust, Manager Employee Relations)

The experiences of Karen reveal the complexities of the shifting social categorisation of class. In the interview she indicated that she felt middle-class but after the interview emailed the researcher to say they had not reflected on her class before and felt her traditional work class background had more of an influence on her career management experiences, in particular building social capital gains relationships with senior colleagues in the business. Karen indicated she said middle class, as she feels this is the 'expectation' at her level. These experiences are also shared by Arianna, as the following quote highlights despite her new

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middle-class status through educational and economic gains she still feels overlooked for not meeting the traditional middle class ideal;

> I know I am capable but I am always worried about how I am being perceived. I know I am not as 'out there' as some of my colleagues. I know I am delivering (.) but it's not always acknowledged in the same way as others. I should probably be trying to get myself out there more.
>
> (Arianna (38) White British, Traditional Working Class, Employee Relations Manager)

  Other intersectional localities reveal sites of privilege from their previous non- professional status jobs and administrative backgrounds. The following quote from Elizabeth reveals that she has been able to build better social capital from working her way up into HR;

> You know I started my career in the typing pool. Then I moved into a PA role for two of the directors. And slowly I proved my worth. In lots of ways it has been the best thing for my HR career. Starting where I did. Those directors knew how reliable I am. I have good relationships with most of the senior management team here. And that started from those days. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

 In the context of her career management her non-professional background brought her perceived credibility. These experiences are in common with Aida and Adriene, first generational migrants to the UK that reveal from a position of 'other' and potential weakness in terms of their English skills they construct this, as something that has helped them to develop credibility in the business.

> I still think of my language as a major barrier. My written English is fine now. All the studies have helped with that. But spoken (.) I have to think about what I am going to say. Particularly on difficult cases at work. Although I have actually been told I speak in a very directive tone which they seem to like. It is more about me wanting to know that I am selecting my words very carefully so I am giving the correct advice. But they seem to like it (laughs). I think it makes me sounds like I am in control (.) When

I don't always feel like that. (Aida (37), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

I know I am thought of as calm and professional. I do take time to think over decisions and actions. Often this is because I need to think of how to express myself in English. I have to spend more time listening and really focus on listening, which I suppose some people don't. (Adriene (41), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, Medium sized waste management company, HR Business partner)

From this initial position of 'other' the women are able to use what could be considered marginalised positions to improve their credibility in the workplace. In a similar vein Estelle described how she did an accountancy course back home and when she first came to UK she worked as a cleaner. It was in this role that she started doing timesheets for other cleaners. When the supervisor went off on sick leave and he noticed her accounting skills and asked her to do payroll. In the context of her HR career Estelle discursively constructs this, as the start of her journey in the HR profession, which she feels gave her good grounding for working in HR. A common discourse in the HR profession, connected to the commercial and credibility discourse of delivering for the business in terms of the bottom line, is the need for HR professionals to be better at numbers and quantitatively data driven, as seen in the following quote;

Being good with numbers has really helped my career. I think this has set me apart in HR and I have moved more quickly because of it (.) It certainly helped me when I first started working. When my manager realised I could manage spreadsheets I became involved in a lot of large restructuring projects. In the end I was leading on some of them when I was in a more junior position. The piece of advice I would give anyone coming into HR is have Excel training and know your numbers.
(Estelle (36), British Black-African, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Medium sized IT consultancy, HR Manager)

Gendered debates in the context of 'being commercial' in the HR profession continue in the context of seeking to de-feminise the profession by focusing on evidence-based HR and big data, which emphasize gendered masculine strengths in quantitative handling. Implicit in this

is that HRs current feminised status means it is lacking in analytical and numerical skills. Gendered assumptions of behaviours and ways of undoing the desirability of a masculine strategic orientation appear ever present and serves to undermine what is considered, as feminine and how doing femininity means not being strategic;

> Being strategic, getting ahead in this job means producing statistics on people and then seeing what more we can get out of them to meet the business objectives. Then we can say we are evidenced based. The evidence is not always going to be positive for people. Usually the evidence is saying this is not going to have a good impact on them. (Christine (39), White British, Middle class, Food manufacturing, HR manager generalist role)

Another tension in the talk of the participants created by the commerciality discourse is when people are treated, as a resource or number. The above quote reveals the cynical feelings towards managing people in the way of a resource. This reflects some of the inherent tensions in the profession, in relation to HR's role of being both on the side of management and supporting employees;

> Where I am currently working they are trying to save money (.) Fine (.) [*exhales*]. But there are a lot of poor practices. There is no way I am going to be compromised. Some of the ways they work does not align with my ethos at all. Um (.) I am used to good practice. Even if there is not going to be good outcome for the individual I want them treated fairly and for me to know I can walk away with my head held high. You might not get the desired result and it might mean that someone loses their job but (.) you walk away knowing that the individual believes they have been treated fairly. (Janet (40), Black Caribbean, New Affluent worker, Banking, HR manager)

> For me I came into this job for a reason (.) I know it's not always popular to say (.) but I wanted to work with people and wanted to see positive changes for them. I also think that work is meaningful in people's lives and our work can have a much bigger impact. (Isobel (36), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Medium tech company, Talent manager)

There is misalignment between the values of why the women joined the profession in the context of discursively struggling to align their own values to the hegemonic commercial discourse in the profession. Exploring the alternative discursive resources available, participants apply a different set of criteria for their contribution to organisational outcomes and social relations with managers and employees.

> Sometimes I think I am totally two-faced. I don't think I am lying to employees but I suppose what I means is (.) Is you can be cut throat in the board room. But I try to be fair and balanced when you discuss the issues with employees. I feel a bit bad. I go from this ruthless discussion about what is best for the bottom line to telling employees this will be the best thing that has ever happened to them.
> (Anna (37), White British, Middle-class, Small Investment Bank, HR Business Partner

Complex multiple discourse positioning in relation to how social relations within the business can be managed emerges from the talk of the participants and reveals a number of inherent tensions that still exist within the profession.

6.3 'We are own worst enemy' – the 'costs' of investing in the HR profession

The above quote in the title from Susan reveals how she experiences HR, as their own worse enemy when it comes to training and development. It is used here in the context of the commercial discourse shaping the experiences of access to training and development, as it arguably reflects the complex discursive practices that take place in the historical context of the profession supporting others, the feminised nature of the profession and gender, ethnic and class discourses.

As middle managers the participants have some access to mobilise resources for key career management experiences, such as training. However, as the following discussions reveals the inter-discursive practices that took place at the location of gender, ethnicity and class reveals the impact of these on the experiences of the women in relation to opportunities available and how they can access training. The ways in which the commercial discourse of HR and needing to demonstrate 'return to the business' is inflected and inscribed with other professional discourses relating to the status and credibility of the profession, reveals how the

women at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class discursively experience under-investment or attention to their development needs. As the following discursive practices reveal;

> I have thought for a long time that HR doesn't give enough to its own development. I think we're maybe getting better at those things but still (…).
> *EE Why has development of HR people been overlooked?*
> (…) Probably due to time and money. Priorities. (…) I just don't think we're seen as a priority and that development needs are elsewhere (…) I think is also difficult in a climate of restructuring to justify. I am not sure some people in the business would be happy about it if they found out. (Joy (42), British with Caribbean, Middle class, Education, HR Manager generalist role)

The following from Janet and Kate discussing training opportunities in the HR profession reveals the pervasiveness of the hegemonic commercial discourse and how it shapes career management experiences;

> The budget is not always not there. And then I think we are less generous with it when it is. Always paranoid about the commercial return on it'. (Janet (40), Black Caribbean, New Affluent worker, Banking, HR manager)

> I have never felt like my career is really supported in HR. I guess you are focusing on the rest of the staff. There are also issues about how things are structured in HR here (.) It's like we're mini teams and we never really join into one. (Kate (36), White British, New affluent worker, NHS Trust, HR manager generalist role)

The final quote also reveals how needing to support the wider organisation inscribes the commercial discourse and results in less focus on the HR profession. Within this complex picture the majority of the participants discussed not always having access to the full range of training they felt they needed;

> My experience in HR has tended to be if you not talented I am not investing in you.
> *EE How do they decide who is talented?* If your face fits (.) It's like anywhere. I think some people stand out quicker. For whatever reason. I don't think we're very good in

HR at slowing down and noticing people. Noticing what everyone is doing. What they can do. (Joy (42), British with Caribbean, Middle class, Education, HR Manager generalist role)

The above quote reveals the complex discursive positioning in exploring access to development opportunities within the profession that implies that only certain people are considered 'talented'. The silences here suggest potential biases in the decision making (if your face fits) but then this is moved on from in the context of her being too busy to notice everyone.

Exploring the experiences of women in the HR profession and access to training and development at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class exposes how for some participants this can be framed around negative experiences of being the 'other' and disfranchisement in being overlooked for opportunities. White, middle-class participants whilst experiencing a lack of training opportunities were more likely to construct this around the commercial discourse without naming gender, class or ethnicity as a factor.

The following quote from Aida reveals the discursive struggles associated with have a training request ignored;

I understood their decision making (.) I think at that time they didn't want me leaving the business once a week to study. There was so much going on at work then (.) and they needed us close to the business. Then there was the money. My predecessors tended to do the qualification and run (…) what upset me was how they handled it. (…) My manager never actually told me face to face why they wouldn't fund it. When I knew they funded other people. I had to chase and chase even to get a response to my email. So, in the end I just signed up and paid myself and then she sent an email. Saying something about budgets (...) Which is fair enough. But I don't think everyone is treated like that (.) (Aida (37), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

The way in which Aida uses a range of discourses to try and make sense of a situation, which is frustrating and challenging for her is evident from the above quote. Her changing subject position reveals the way in which she moves to tolerating or accepting the behaviour

through the use of the commercial HR discourse at the expense of investing in people. Whilst the subject position alters in the context of trying to understand why she was being ignored and treated differently to other women in her position the silence at the end of the sentences reveals her experience, as 'other'.

Suzanne was able to draw discursively on negative experiences and mobilise resources of self-belief and determination, which originated from their 'othered' location to give them career management advantaged. Drawing on discourses of self-efficacy and self-determination and recognition for how they 'were in the lucky position to be able to pay' the following examples highlights how Suzanne was able to mobilise resources when initially turned down for a training opportunity;

> My old manager called me up when she was on sick leave (.) and said they want the board reports in a dashboard. She asked what were my Excel skills like ? [laughs] I said it would probably best if I could get some training to learn some specific dashboards skills (.) She wouldn't pay. She reckoned it was too expensive'. (Suzanne (35), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Large corporate bank, HR Business Analyst)

Suzanne goes on to explain how she was in the lucky position to the take two weeks holiday and self-fund the training. Her discursive practice centred around a self-belief and determination to succeed in her career. Suzanne went on to discuss how she has always been determined to succeed and would always look for alternatives when people said no and that this self-confidence had come from her large extended family, where there was always someone who believed her. Not having had much money when she was growing up she now describes herself, as in a very comfortable financial position through the hard work and she felt 'lucky' she was able to self-fund opportunities for her career when they arose.

6.4 'It too commercial for me' – the conditions for opting in and out of commitment to the profession

The discourse of commercially oriented *vs*. people-oriented HR when experienced at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class and dependent on social interactions in a given context, reveals how the commercial discourse could also shift the powerfulness of the

speaker in the context of their career management experiences. For some of the traditional middle-class, white women they constructed degrees of uncomfortableness from working in HR, compared to their friends doing more traditional professional roles.

> A lot of my friends are teachers or work in the NHS [places head in hands and cringes]. They absolutely hate HR. It can be embarrassing. A lot of the others are creative types. I did a creative degree. They can't understand why I'm working in HR. Sacking people all the time [laughs]. It makes me think I should be doing something different with my career. (Cassandra (36), White British, Middle-class, Small financial company, HR Manager)

The commercial discourse of HR sits uncomfortably with the speaker and a discourse of doing something more meaningful or creative competes. In this space wanting to return to the values-based HR or move into an Organisational Development (OD) or Learning and Development role was explored;

> I want to try and do my coaching qualification and see if I can make it as a consultant. I want to try and make a positive difference to people's lives. That is why I joined HR in the first place. I'm a bit fed up with all the case work. It endless. I'm not sure anyone really benefits from it in end. (Ariana (38), White British, Traditional working class, Retail, Employee Relations managers)

> Ultimately (.) I think you need to be away from a business facing role. Otherwise you will also be at their beck and call. (Anna (37), White British, Middle-class, Small Investment Bank, HR Business Partner)

A theme of opting-out either in relation to pursuing a more meaningful career that aligns more closely to their values is then evident in the women's discursive practice or they discuss moving out of their current role. The following quotes from Estelle and Adriene positioned themselves differently in the context of their career and social relations external to the profession. In discussions with friends and family outside of the profession working in HR, irrespective of the commercial connotations or difficulties, it's professional status a source of great pride;

Friends and families travelled from all over when I got my Masters degree. They were so pleased for me. What I'd achieved. They know how hard it's been. It's not always easy working in HR. But to see everyone on that day and to know how proud they are of me. It's a great source of happiness for me. (Estelle (36), British Black-African, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Medium sized IT consultancy, HR Manager)

The community are so proud of me. I have achieved a lot. They know when I set my mind to something I will do it. So, I keep working at this. (Aida (37), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

Achieving professional status is a new country is experienced as a source of great pride. In emphasizing the way in which subject positions are complex and shifting this also presented a challenge to them, particularly when their roles become threatened by the realities of commercially oriented HRM. The following from Adriene reveals the vulnerabilities experienced in the context of how restructuring and redundancies are managed in the organisation after a buyout by a new company and how the discourse of opting out is less available;

They take decisions and they don't really care about how people will be affected. It makes me feel that if they do it to them they can do it to us. So (.) any time it could also happen to me (.) It's a number games (.) I will give an example. This place wasn't really highly unionised before, however since joining this company everyone has joined the union [Laughs] and surprisingly even me [laughs]. With these insecurities anything could happen, at any time and I am not sure what that would mean for me. (Adriene (41), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, Medium sized waste management company, HR Business partner)

Sometimes you have to pick your battles. We're going through another restructuring. I'm tired of it. I know it won't be handled well (.) But I'll sit it out. Like the last one. (Mandy (35), British Black- African, A new affluent worker, Education, HR Manager)

The quotes above reveal how a discourse of opting out and choice is replaced with 'sitting it out' and uncertainty. The complex ways in which social capital works within and outside of the profession for career management support is explored here through an intersectional lens. It reveals how the women could adopt counterintuitive positions of privilege, as well as disadvantage. Their experiences are shaped by gender connotations of being credible and the nature of strategic work. These inherent tensions support and undermine their efforts to build social capital within organisations.

Summary

This chapter has addressed the first research objective by exploring the role of dominant, commercially orientated HR professional discourses on the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class. It has revealed through the intersectional lens the multiple subject positions that can be adopted through discursive practices that assimilate to and resist dominant discourses. The impact of the discourse on training opportunities for all the women was identified. However, equally evident was alternative career management discourses and sites of privilege at intersectional localities, such as desire to succeed provided the context and discursive space for assumptions in relation to where privilege and power resides.

CHAPTER 7 Exploring gendered careerist and motherhood discourses- the complex discursive interactions of choice, motherhood and careerist orientations and looks at the simultaneous locality of gender, ethnicity and class

The this chapter addresses the second research objective of the thesis, which was to explore how gendered careerist and motherhood discourses shape the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class. All of the women were mothers and at the time of their interviews were working full-time. The intersectional lens reveals for many of the women their career paths were shaped by complex discursive practices constructed around socio-economic factors, a drive to succeed and family and social expectations of being a good mother and successful careerist. The chapter will also explore the role of respectable business femininity discourses in the discursive practices of the women, as they seek to navigate how they 'present' at work for career gains.

7.1 '*Why be part-time? You're not doing anything properly then*'

Of particular significance to the talk of the women in this context was 'being part-time,' which was constructed negatively in terms of being sufficiently available, in order to demonstrate commitment to their careers. The ideal worker discourse defines how commitment is valued in organisations. The influence of this discourse was persuasive in constructing the prospects of adopting part-time work and reflects the quote in the subheading by Ariana that working part-time represents not achieving either the expectation of a good careerist or a good mother, so is not necessarily desirable, particularly in the context of constrained socio-economic conditions;

> I just never considered working part-time even when the children were small. I'm not sure what you are achieving working part time (…) It was at time I was trying to build my career. So, I needed to be available (.) But of course it was hard. And at the time I was the main bread winner so giving up work wasn't really an option. (Krystle (36), British Black-African, New Affluent worker, Small start-up tech firm, HR Business Partner)

This position was shared with other Black- Caribbean and Black-African women who whilst were now occupying the position of New Affluent Worker discursively constructed their

commitment to working full-time from the lower socio-economic position that they occupied growing up;

> For black women you have two choices. You're either going to work or you're not (.) It's working or benefits. There is not the same financial security blanket that some people have (.) So, what would working part- time achieve? For me once I had these qualifications and opportunities I knew that I had to stick at it. (Suzanne (35), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Large corporate bank, HR Business Analyst)

> The realities of working part-time are you are always going to be overlooked (.) For me it wasn't an option (.) Anyway (.) I was by myself when the children were young so I had to work full-time. (Joy (42), British with Caribbean, Middle class, Education, HR Manager generalist role)

However, working full-time could not simply be understood as adopting a masculine ideal, as this experience was shaped by a range of discursive practices;

> It has been really hard. Working full time and bringing up the kids. When they are sick. Missing important things are school (…) but I have seen the benefits. I wouldn't have got my last promotion if I had been part-time. I have been able to show them what I can do. (Janet (40), Black Caribbean, New Affluent worker, Banking, HR manager)

> I've moved quicker for being full-time. I think my career would probably have stalled if I'd gone part-time (.) I've been able to do more. Take on more responsibility, which I've ultimately benefited from. (Susan (42), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Banking, Employee relations manager)

The ideal worker discourse emerges here in the context that part-time working was constructed, as a barrier to opportunities. There was a persuasiveness to the discourse of part-time work being lower status and showing less commitment. From the position of the traditional middle-class participants they constructed part-time work differently and in the main, as an inevitable part of their careers. The experience of part-time was constructed not from a socio-economic perspective (only in that it was not a financial necessity to work) but

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from a choice perspective. This was intertwined discursively with the committed ideal worker discourse and HR business partner discourse of needing to be available to the business, resulting in the inevitable experience of putting their career on hold for a period of time;

I knew when the children were little I was never going to be able to balance home (.) with being a business partner. I didn't want to be available in the evenings once the kids had gone to bed to log in or take calls. And certainly not at the weekends. I've seen lots of women try and fail. I guess I was fortunate that I could step out for a while because of my husband's job. (Christine (39), White British, Middle class, Food manufacturing, HR manager generalist role)

I worked part-time when the kids were little. I couldn't really see any other way. I didn't want to look back and think I had missed out on important things when they were small. At the time my husband's job was going well and he needed to be full-time so it worked out well. I was able to pick up full-time work again. Quite easily. More easily then I thought.
(Anna (37), White British, Middle-class, Small Investment Bank, HR Business Partner)

I never intended to work full-time when we had the children. I have been lucky, as I also knew I didn't want to give up work completely. I would have gone mad at home. So, I think I had a good balance.
(Margaret (50), White British, Middle Class, Large pharmaceutical, HR Business Partner)

The following quote from Alana further illustrates how choice and fitting work around family is inter-discursively constructed around a range of gendered and professional discourses. In particular the notion that the HR business partner is not compatible with working full-time. The lack of space in the following quote, for an alternative position to the dominant discourse of being available full-time to the business emerges below;

I essentially took a demotion to work part-time when the children were little. I knew I wasn't going to be able to the business partner role on a part-time business. I spoke to my boss and we tried to make something work but in the end (.) I moved into a

project role (.) It took a little getting used to. The new role. But the realities of doing the business partner role part-time meant it was just not an option. It has also meant being able to be at home when the children needed me most. (Alana (35) White British, Traditional working-class background and now identifies as new affluent worker, Education, HR Manager)

The silenced alternative discourse would be for part-time work to not be associated, as being less committed against the ideal worker but there is limited space in the discursive practice of the middle class white women seeking to balance working and family life. Evident here is also the intensive mothering discourse that has become inscribed into women's experiences of balancing work and motherhood. The discourse of intensive parenting is evident in the discursive practices of the women, as they then justify a careerist attitude;

It's wasn't easy coming back to full time work. My family think I'm nuts and I look at my friends who are staying at home and sometimes think (.) What am I doing? There is a lot of pressure to be the perfect parent (.) I think it's still more common for women to stay at home now or certainly to be part-time. That is certainly the case at the school. We often say at the school that managing everything to do with the kids is a full-time job (.) On top of this job. (Kate (36), White British, New affluent worker, NHS Trust, HR manager generalist role)

The interdiscursivity amongst the women in evident, as they reconcile managing their professional lives with the expectations of being a good mother. As further evidence by X and X, as they talk about balancing work, mothering and developing her career;

Well you just feel guilty all of the time. I've got used to it. It can often be a feeling of failing at both (.) I do worry about the impact of my work on the kids. When I am at home I try really hard not open the laptop again until they are in bed. And there are just some things I can't do at work. I've got to use it. (Anna (37), White British, Middle-class, Small Investment Bank, HR Business Partner

I thought it would get easier as the kids get older but there is a lot of pressure from the schools and all their clubs. Balancing everything after school is really hard. I don't want them missing out because of my work (.) So, you have to choose and know what

you can realistically commit to at work and home. (Mandy (35), British Black-African, A new affluent worker, Education, HR Manager)

It's me as mum who is expected to take to the majority share of it. My husband is supportive but at the end of the day it will be me that drops everything if the kids are ill or need taking here there and everywhere. (Janet (40), Black Caribbean, New Affluent worker, Banking, HR manager)

Through the poststructuralist lens the interdiscursivity of intensive parenting with the availability and needs of their professional development remain a constant source of negotiation or constant 'doing' for the women, in terms of the enactment of both mother and careerist. The importance of self-determination and drive was also evident in the 'careerist' behaviours performed by the Black- Caribbean and Black-African participants, which were driven from their family backgrounds and their socio-economic position. The experiences of their grandparents and parents discursively constructed the importance of gaining professional status and succeeding in a profession;

My mum has always worked two jobs. I was always going to work and I knew I wanted to be a success. (Isobel (36), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Medium tech company, Talent manager)

The most important thing in my family was for all of us kids to own our own homes. When my grandparents came here they always worked two or three jobs. All they wanted was for us (.) was for us to all own our own houses and have good jobs. (Paula (49), British Black-Caribbean, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Large government department, HR Business analysis with a remint for employee wellbeing)

Careerist attitudes of working full time and succeeding were expressed discursively and repeatedly in the context of what their families had done and sacrificed for them. Highlighting again the important role that external social relations can play in the career management experiences of women. Participants from non-traditional middle-class backgrounds could discursively construct and draw on wider historical and culturally specific discourses that meant their experiences of managing their working lives and family were

constructed more positively. Their decision to work full-time was shaped by this drive to work and not wanting to lose the professional status achieved through hard work and qualifications. Whilst there was a financial necessity or imperative to work full time they also gained satisfaction from working and developing their careers in a professional environment in the context of their social relations outside of work.

However, despite the committed careerist behaviours identified above from different interdiscursive positions the majority of the women tended to construct more senior HR roles as fitting a traditional ideal worker mould and this could act, as a discursive barrier to progressing further in their careers;

> The HR director is a woman and she is more masculine then most of the blokes in the organisation!' (Tina (43), White British, Traditional working-class background and now identifies as new affluent worker, police, HR Business Partner)

> The predominant conversation at the top of organisations is still masculine. I think many women opt out of their careers way before senior management. You do not need to be there to experience it. (Christine (39), White British, Middle class, Food manufacturing, HR manager generalist role)

> You're going to have to expect to work long hours. The closer to the business and the higher you go. I think there is a long hours culture in HR'. (Mandy (35), British Black- African, A new affluent worker, Education, HR Manager)

In a similar vein female HR directors or senior women were constructed, as being childless or less maternal. In doing so, the women questioned if by occupying more senior HR roles, could the right commitment to the family and respectable femininity be made. As per the kaleidoscope model the choices of the women were shaped by what could be a loss of authenticity;

> I am not sure if I am cut out for a more senior role. It's the hours. The games. I don't think it's possible to do it without compromising who you are. Your home life. I think a lot of the senior HR women here don't have kids. (Auriella (35), British Black- African, Middle class, Banking, HR Business Partner)

I have not met many female HR directors that you would call a women's women. Often, they can be less flexible then the men. (Susan (42), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Banking, Employee relations manager)

It's a juggle now (.) There is a lot of vulnerability in it (...) I think you can be made to feel like you are failing at both. Particularly the more senior you go. The expectations on men and women in these roles are very different. Nothing stops at home either. (Anna (37), White British, Middle-class, Small Investment Bank, HR Business Partner

Organisations are locations where women come to understand the requirements of senior roles and how they can fit into them. It was discursively constructed here in the context of not wanting to live up to the assumption of failing at both motherhood and a senior management role, due to the persuasiveness of the ideal worker discourse, intertwined with the availability requirements of the HR profession. The availability and work primacy associated with senior HR roles was discursively constructed, as unbalancing family and outside commitments.

The impact of this threat was felt more sharply in the context of their own well-being by those women from lower socio-economic backgrounds and first generational migrants to the country. The impact of being a good careerist and juggling family life already took a toll on their wellbeing;

To be honest right now I don't really have a life. I don't socialise at all outside of work which is not good. (Aida (37), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

Aida goes on to explain that she always takes work home with her and checks emails in the evening after the children have gone to bed and then;

The weekends I feel so tired I have to do shopping, cleaning the house (.) I can't do any of that during the week days. Then by Sunday evenings I am checking work emails and preparing for the week ahead. You know it is a lot. It's worth it but it's hard. There is no room for anything else. (Aida (37), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

From the inter-discursive lens of gender, ethnicity and class the impact on the quality of life outside of work for participants from new classifications of middle-class workers is evident. There is pressure in maintaining the ideal worker discourse and showing how they are able to 'cope' with dual demands, in order to maintain their professional status.

> I come home in the evening and once the kids are asleep (.) I do all the paperwork in the evening so that when I get into the office the next day I can get on with the new things. I do the same with emails. I prepare all the emails in draft and then I just hit send in the morning. If I start sending them out in the evening at 11pm at night then people are going to see what I am doing (.) One day I accidently pressed send and the manager who got the email replied saying you need to go to bed (.) That was so embarrassing. It wasn't good. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

It was common for the women to construct work, which needed to conducted outside of working hours, as invisible. The impact on the wellbeing of the participants is significant but expressed the view of needing to go on coping within the constructs of what is expected on them in terms of their professional role. The intersectional lens exposes the complex interdiscursive practices associated with the ideal worker, motherhood and 'choice' and career experiences of women in the HR profession. The strain placed on the discursive positioning of the women in the context of managing home and their professional or ideal worker status is evident and impacts both on their perceptions of the viability of occupying more senior roles and their current wellbeing. The intersectional lens reveals some counterintuitive privileged positions for the women in addition to more disadvantaged experiences, as a consequence of the emerging middle-class status and balancing pressure of home and work. Careerist behaviours are not associated simply, as choice but reflect the impact of family and social relations outside of the profession in relation to the development of and self-driven career behaviours. The analysis also reveals the lack of discursive space in the female middle management pipeline for any other position than; *senior roles and family life are not compatible.*

7.2 '*Twin sets from M and S and pearls*' - the role of respectable business femininity and the ideal worker in the discursive construction of 'looking professional' for career management gains through the intersectional lens

A further way in which the ideal worker and respectable business femininity discourse influenced the career management experiences of the participants was in the discursive construction of the physical professional presentation of what is meant to be an HR manager and senior leader. The poststructuralist and intersectional lens applied here reveals a fluid picture of how femininities and masculinities are performed in the context of the 'ideal' physical demeanour of the HR professional, resulting in the occupation of both powerful and less powerful career management positions for the participants.

> I have worked her since I was 18. How I present is important. You have to look professional. I would not wear a t-shirt or anything if I was meeting with a senior manager. I would judge that ! Or something I could go out in. I want to present as someone who could be seen in a more senior position. I'm not sure if it should be taken so seriously but it is. (Karen)

> Meeting with a senior manager I would be thinking about what I am wearing and going to say. I always remember a colleague saying to me when I went to my first board meeting (.) you should try and act in a way so that no one would guess that you are from HR. (Adriene (41), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, Medium sized waste management company, HR Business partner)

The quotes reveal the discursive way in which dress and professional demeanour is important for status gains and needing to present in terms of the expectations of the business, which creates gravitas for the HR persona. The impact of the discursive construction of the HR profession, as still seeking legitimacy is evident. The following quotes from Sue captures this complex multiple discursive construction of how the presentation and demeanour of the HR profession is understood and both assimilated to and resisted;

> Twin sets and pearls brigade (.) that's how I thought of the women in HR. I see them as the people that wear M&S. HR managers that is. There is an HRM type of person. My background was the unions and I wanted to help people. HRM is there to sweat

the human resource. That is why I got into an OD role as quickly as I could. Ok I might not get promoted so quickly from here. But I didn't want to simply be a tool for management to deliver. Always looking after the revenues. Its proved to be a bit of a check to me. I don't want to be like you. (Sue (49), White British, Traditional working class, Retail banking, OD Manager)

The quote reveals the discursive use of employee-centred HR to resist the assimilation to the middle-class ideal of behaving in the HR profession, highlighting the way in which dominant professional discourses can compete with each other. In seeking to understand how femininities and masculinities are performed in feminised professions the discursive and intersectional lens reveals sites of potential resistance to inherently gendered discourses, associated with the desirability of masculine behaviours of power and control. The gendered middle-class connotation of twin-sets and pearls is associated negatively with a type of HR behaviour that prevents balance in relation to meeting the needs of the business and people. Whilst discursively constructing this positively in the context of wanting to be 'othered' from this position Sue goes on to explore how by not being able to assimilate to this middle-class ideal there will be career implications in terms of progression and needing to work harder, in order to prove themselves;

I'm a token East Ender (.) I feel like the class system is alive and well and you are judged by the way you present yourself. So, yes, you know you watch your P and Qs but I still have an East End accent so I think class is a big issues. Promotion wise you have to be a certain type of person. (…) Some people can break that mould but you do have to be really good. You'll need to work twice as hard. (Sue (49), White British, Traditional working class, Retail banking, OD Manager)

The final quotes exposed the way in which women through the intersectional lens can be positioned powerfully and powerless through discourse. The silence that followed the discourse of needing to work harder if they are going to succeed from the position of traditional working class is a closure mechanism. The space for alternative discourses in relation to structural changes and exposing the power relations that could challenge this position is closed. The options available to Sue then become to opt out into a non-HR generalist position by working in Organisational Development, where a perception of greater

balance between the financial and human needs of the profession is achieved even if this was going to be detrimental to her career.

Gendered middle-class connotations in the context of how the HR professional should present were also evident through discourses of respectable business femininity that constructed women in HR, as needing to act with decorum and restraint. As evident from Cassandra in her interactions with her Chief Executive;

> The Chief Exc makes jokes all the time (.) 'Oh look out here's HR – don't say anything in front of her'. Oh he says totally inappropriate things all the time. He thinks that HR are going to tell him off. He swears a lot and um I don't want to be the prudish HR person that has to tell him.' (Cassandra (36), White British, Middle-class,

A discursive practice of balancing business femininity for building strategic engagement and also social relations gains is evident but interdiscursivity also exists, as there is a recognition that the social relations gained from these practices would be short lived;

> I think he knows I am not here to be his friend. Sure, we can muck about a bit but I've got a job to do (.) At the end of the day I am going to have to tell him things that he doesn't want to hear about how he is running his business. I need him to hear me so I do try to keep a distance from some of the other stuff that you can get dragged into. I think this way he takes me more seriously. (Cassandra (36), White British, Middle-class, Small financial company, HR Manager)

The discursive practices represent a balancing act between gendered domesticity discourses and careerist orientations, with an overarching expectation for business femininity placing the participants under discursive strain in the context of their own career management experiences. The intersectional lens reveals, however, that the role of business femininity and the weight of expectation for presentation and behaviour is discursively experienced differently and for some in exclusionary ways;

> So, at my last PDR in that company. This was when I knew it was time to leave. My manger said to me 'I need you to be more like X'. I was shocked. I couldn't believe it. The only area of my work she could comment on to improve was that I just needed to

be more like X. X who always shows up late and I thought had way too personal relationships with the managers. My manager was saying that I needed to lighten up and be more like her. Like I was too professional!' (Rebecca (37), White British, Traditional working class, Medium manufacturer and retailer, HR Business partner)

Rebecca explained how her comparator in her review embodied the middle-class ideal in terms of looks and how she spoke but did not actually behave in a professional manner that she would aspire to. The experience highlights how seeking to adopt the standards of the ideal worker can actually reinforce rather than break down structural inequality because of the unchallenged continuation of powerful gender, ethnicity and class relations at play within organisations and professions. However, as the intersectional experience above reveals, this picture is more complex and women can develop alternative discursive practices that construct both privileged and disadvantaged positions in relation to impression management and social networks. For some of the Black-Caribbean and Black- African, New Affluent Worker status women, impression management and assimilation is discursively constructed differently and as something that needs to be actively managed to overcome barriers within the workplace based on class symbols and ethnicity, as Susan's discursive practice of when she enters a new organisation reveals;

> You just have to (.) I am always looking for an opportunity compensate or put people at ease. I drop in things that show we have things in common. Like Radio 4. (Laughs). I want to put people at ease. Well we can't talk about our hair ! So, I'm looking for other things. Other areas we have in common. You know holidays or what have you.

Ethnic minority women are often required to fit into the existing cultures if they want to penetrate influential networks or be given opportunities for career development and advancement. The onus was on the women to find ways to assimilate and to reassure the organisation of their legitimacy to be there in the context of finding common ground within the masculine, middle-class ideal worker.

> I make sure I stay very private. When I am here I am very professional they don't need to know anything about what I am doing outside of work. I have a really full life outside of work but I very rarely talk about what we're are doing. In my experience

you need to be friendly but not too friendly. (Suzanne (35), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Large corporate bank, HR Business Analyst)

It goes back to that upbringing. I will work really hard during work hours. But I will never use the work internet or anything. I don't want knowing what I'm doing outside of work. Where I'm shopping. (Krystle (36), British Black-African, New Affluent worker, Small start-up tech firm, HR Business Partner)

The use of being professional was reinforced consistently, as a means of creating distance and assimilation. The intersectional lens reveals how for some of the Black Caribbean and Black African women, particularly from first generational immigrant status appeared that they still experienced othering despite doing everything to embody what it means to be professional within the HR profession. The following extract from Dee reveals the complex interdiscursivity that takes place, as they seek to wrestle to understand of their experience of not being successful for certain roles;

Looks ? Very funny question (.) interesting question (.) I do think (.) the way I have interpreted that question is that sometimes your face needs to fit. And I have found that in some of the interviews that I have gone for (.) I know I have handled the questions to the best of my ability. I have all the right experience (.) But it comes down to if I don't fit the organisation. And I know this. As I have also been on the other side of the table. Whilst I am not the one saying those things I have heard my colleagues saying things. It's shocking how it's not really your technical skills that get you the job now but more (.) whether you are going to be a nice fit or not. Whether your face fits. (Dee (42), British Black- Africa, Middle class, Medium sized facilities, HR Manager generalist role)

The above and below quotes reveal, whilst accepting and conforming to the discursive image of the professional body it can still act as a closure mechanism in the face of existing gender, ethnicity and class power relations. The use of symbolic expressions through power dressing and handbags cannot mitigate for the exclusion and marginalisation that professionals from the none dominant elite groups can experience;

I went into this interview where the only positive thing she said to me was I like your handbag. You just get this instance sense if they think you're going to fit in or not. It's not really about what you have done and what you can do. They know what they're looking for. (Isobel (36), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Medium tech company, Talent manager)

I have had interview feedback (laughs) this was interesting. They said I was too professional! And that wouldn't fit their culture and that their people are more laid back. I was too professional. Yeah (.) and I was thinking (.) I was wearing my power blazer and glasses. Um but if I have to drop all of those things then maybe I wasn't the best person for the job. But personally all the feedback I have got (.) It likes 'wow' interesting. I think inwardly on what sectors I will be applying for. (Janet (40), Black Caribbean, New Affluent worker, Banking, HR manager)

In the above quote the attempts to construct the experience through organisations seeking the best fit and her discursive struggle, including some cynicism in constructing the experience, silences what appears to be in the background that there was another reason for why she wasn't chosen for the roles. This section has explored through the intersectional lens how attempts to assimilate to the ideal HR demeanour and self-presentation can still create conditions where social inequalities are reproduced in terms of the career outcomes women can expect.

7.3 '*What won't I do*' the impact of the ideal worker and respectable business femininity discourses on managing in the middle and the impact on career management gains

This chapter has explored how the intersectional lens reveals the complex discursive experiences of the women in seeking to fit their self-presentation into the ideals of an accepted professional demeanour and physical appearance for expected, but not always achieved career gains. The statement above '*what won't I do*' from Susan reflects the discursive practice amongst the participants that extra work needed to be taken on to develop relationships with the business and to gain more 'generalist experience' to advance their careers. The majority of the participants used the importance of gaining generalist experience, as a significant discourse for career management gains within the HR profession;

I think for higher level roles you need so much more generalist experience. But that needs to come from working within the business because there is nothing worse than an HR person telling you how to do something and they have not actually worked in that environment'. (Arianna (38) White British, Traditional Working Class, Employee Relations Manager)

You need a bit if everything on your CV to get really far in HR. (Suzanne (35), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Large corporate bank, HR Business Analyst)

What I have seen is that the more generalist experience you can get the faster your career will move. I think it's the exposure and the range of issues you can handle for the business. I'm always conscious of expanding my generalist experience. (Krystle (36), British Black-African, New Affluent worker, Small start-up tech firm, HR Business Partner)

The significance and persuasiveness of the discourse for gaining HR generalist experience intensified following the introduction of the Ulrich model and the changes that took place in relation to the ways in which HR departments were structured. The recognition and persuasiveness of generalist experiences was evident in the talk of the participants but the precise definition of what generalist experience actually equated to was missing. Instead 'generalist experience' was formed around the discursive practice of needing to take on more responsibilities and work and was equated with relationship building for career gains;

It's about putting yourself out there and actively taking on more responsibilities. You need to keep putting yourself forward for things (.) It helps you to get noticed. You get exposed to more and work with a bigger range of managers. (Shauna (35), White Irish, Traditional working class. New affluent worker, Government department, HR Business Partner)

I was working well beyond my pay grade. Everyone was saying she is using you but I didn't care. I was willing to take anything on, as I knew (.) when the time comes I could take all that experience into getting my next job. (Auriella (35), British Black-African, Middle class, Banking, HR Business Partner)

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A generalist picks up anything for the business! [Laughs]. It's like running around after them. Particularly at the beginning (.) if you want to earn their trust you've got to show them you can help them. It's like being part of the family. You've got to give and take and from a position of trust you can then start of influence them on the bigger things.' (Christine (39), White British, Middle class, Food manufacturing, HR manager generalist role)

The aspects of domesticity in the talk of the participants and the 'looking after' the business in a maternal manner highlights the gendered way in which being an HR generalist was constructed. However, whilst this was evident in the talk of the participants there was also evidence of considerable contradictions in their discursive practices, as the recognition that behaving in a servicing or generalist way to the business would ultimately prevent genuine careers gains;

Increasingly I wonder about the benefits of being in this generalist role for so long. It's difficult being so available (.) The hours (.) Short notice requests. It's difficult to plan anything. Including what I want from my career. There is just not the time in the day for anything. (Anna (37), White British, Middle-class, Small Investment Bank, HR Business Partner)

The generalists are just not experts in enough things so I think they diagnose the issues wrong…That is when crap happens. And that's when we are left cleaning up the crap. (Laughs). I think the business know this too. They see the generalist as essentially a dog's body. (Sue (49), White British, Traditional working class, Retail banking, OD Manager)

In this gendered context the intersectional lens further serves to expose the way in which gendered discourses are naturalised and embedded by revealing localities of advantage and disadvantage. The intersectional lens can also illuminate the multiple ways which discourses combine and are also in tension with each other to act, as a closure mechanism. The following quote from Ariana reveals her experiences of having discursively conformed to take on extra responsibility in the hope of enhancing her CV but not progressing at the rate that she would expect;

Unless you are willing to take on extra work it can be quite difficult to progress your career. Then this becomes a case of being able to manage to balance everything. I want to take on new work but my old work doesn't get taken away. I keep on saying yes to everything and you can get overwhelmed by it. And anyway (.) then I think you're always going to face barriers (.) Like the job market. It's so competitive. A lot of it is to do with who you know if you want to get to the next level.

With a family background of traditional working class but now adopting New Affluent Worker status there is an aspect of othering in her talk, as there is a recognition that hard work may not always result in the most promotions and this actually comes from social networks and capital. Karen's experience can also be described as othering; also discusses what she describes othering, as being shot down when she uses her initiative and tries to contribute more;

I got shot down. All bright eyed and bushy tailed. Who are you? Fall back in rank. And stay there! Stay there and smile. (Karen (35), White British, Traditional working-class background, New affluent worker years, NHS Trust, Manager Employee Relations)

In a similar vein Auriella explores how her frustrations were internalised and she assumes the respectable business femininity persona of behaving nicely and with decorum;

I was told in a meeting that none of the BP's here have gravitas! I asked him what he meant by that he said 'I need people that can come in here and just shake things up'. By that I think he meant someone who can talk the talk with all the fancy HR jargon but can't actually do anything. And we will be left to do everything. In my head I was thinking keep quiet and leave nicely. (Auriella (35), British Black-African, Middle class, Banking, HR Business Partner)

The following quote from Elizabeth reveals experiencing othering through a constant sense of undermining and not allowing her to adopt a strategic focus;

I set up a committee to support the CSR work in the organisation. What I notice is that the MD will just throw anything in it. He gives me jobs to do as part of the committee. And I say that this is not really strategic CSR and he says 'I know but I

want you to do it'. Like setting up the recycling. I was thinking this is not HR's job. But I did it and implemented it. He then said to me about needing more first aiders. Fine (.) We now have more people trained. But this is not really CSR. He just dumps anything in that he doesn't know where else it fits. It's so frustrating but you can't really say anything. It's his company. I heard him say before if you don't like it you can leave. So, it's not perfect but where is. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working-class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

The way in which the gendered discourses are competing and situating her in different subject positions emerges here. Elizabeth is wanting to be more strategic but being restricted reflects the gendered context and the pressure and frustration of the non- strategic nature of the tasks, managing up and down and the requirement to show willing. There is fatigue in her use of language at the constant undermining, which leads to frustrations and curtails her opportunities to develop activities that would benefit her career.

Summary

In addressing the second research objective of the research this analysis explored how respectable business femininity and the ideal worker discourses become inscribed with working in the middle and the pressure on the women to retain their professional demeanour in the face of significant pressure from their workload. The discussions reveal how femininities and masculinities are performed in complex ways within feminised professions and the intersectional lens exposes sites of discursive resistance and alternative discursive practices. Multi-discursive and considerable interdiscursivity emerges throughout in terms of the professional discourse of commerciality, intensive mothering and the ideal worker, as the participants reconcile experiences of motherhood, their physical presentation and being a middle manager. The intersectional lens reveals the impact on the women's well-being caused by invisible labour and impact of emotional labour of maintaining professional decorum in the face of multiple competing pressures. This impacts career management decisions about the extent to opt in and out of their careers and they discursively construct their career management experiences being judged against an ethnicised and classed business femininity.

Chapter 8 Exploring the role of dominant managing diversity and ethical and sustainable HR discourses in the career management experience of female HR middle managers through the intersectional lens

This final analysis chapter explores the interdiscursivity that existed between dominant managing diversity discourses and sustainable and ethical discourses of HR in the discursive practices of the participants. These discourses significantly influenced their experiences of discrimination in the context of their career management experiences. The impact of direct and subtle forms of discrimination and how they are tolerated and resisted and the potential gatekeeper role for discriminatory behaviours, which the participants themselves could play in their middle management HR role, are explored through the intersectional lens and in the context of perceived career outcomes. In doing so two key research objectives of the research are addressed. The following discursive practices reveal how the participants grapple with their experiences in the context of dominant diversity discourses, which emphasize the role of individuals not organisations, as being discriminatory and emphasises the importance of the business case approach to 'managing diversity'. In this sense their negative experiences are discursively constructed as acceptable given the dominant professional diversity discourses in the profession. Interdiscursively with this position is evidence of ethical and sustainable HR discourses that create tension for the participants, in relation to how they would expect to be treated and what the wider HR profession should value. Sites of career management privilege and disadvantage are then examined through the intersectional lens.

8.1 'I've never experienced it personally' **the role of individualistic and unitarist discourses in constructing experiences of discrimination**

A common discursive practice amongst the women when discussing the potential career barrier of discrimination was to articulate, as Auriella does above that they have not experienced it 'personally'. But in most instances would subsequently go on to construct it as happening to other people within their organisation or even provide a personal example of what could be considered direct or indirect discrimination. The following quote reveals the interdiscursivity of the individualistic discourses of wanting to keep discrimination away from her personal experience but recognising it exists through what she witnessed in her role in HR;

I can honestly say that I haven't. But I have seen it [more serious tone] Because I am in HR I guess I am bound to see it. Right? (Krystle (36), British Black-African, New Affluent worker, Small start-up tech firm, HR Business Partner)

When Krystle was asked how she has seen discriminatory behaviours she replies;

It's interesting we have just introduce named blind CVs so when we get the CVs from the agency they just have initials on them. We needed it as they were rejecting CVs before because they couldn't read the name on the CV [exclaims] But I'm still seeing it. They're still rejecting candidates that they liked on paper but when they meet them they say they're not a good fit for team. When I push them on it. I say you liked his CV. He matched everything. I still get he wasn't a good fit for team (.) or something like he was a bit young. At the end of the day it's his team. Maybe he wasn't the best person for the team. Who knows. (Krystle (36), British Black-African, New Affluent worker, Small start-up tech firm, HR Business Partner)

Whilst not naming the discrimination, as racism it is evident from the reading of the names on the CVs. The discursive practice reveals attempts to challenges the behaviours of the manager but ultimately construct not being able to stop it and use the merit based discourse and the business case approach, in terms of making decision based on the best 'fit' and outcomes for the business.

The use of merit or meritocracy discourses were used by other participants to diminish or trivialise the potential impact of discrimination;

I've never let being a women or being black stop me and I've never used it as an excuse. I have worked hard to achieve what I have. I have got here on merit. (Janet (40), Black Caribbean, New Affluent worker, Banking, HR manager)

The above quote could be seen to be trivialising her experiences of ethnicity and gender by referring to them, as 'an excuse'. Respondents further used individualistic discourses to construct themselves, as autonomous and empowered in their careers even in the context of what could be consider to be overt discrimination;

I didn't expect a bonus but when we were getting them (.) She brought in my bonus letter and she gave me a 5% bonus (.) Fine (.) But I knew. Because I had prepared all the letters and the spreadsheet that she had a 24% bonus (.) despite being off for half the year (.) And I did most of her work. [Laughs]. She knew (.) It was when she said to me 'You have a husband. I don't.' (.) And I just (.) At first I couldn't believe she said it (.) But I thought (.) Basically you're saying that because I have a husband I deserve less then you like my husband was the breadwinner (…) But (.) To be honest. You know by then I wasn't bothered. I knew I was leaving anyway. I had already got everything I wanted out of that company. (Suzanne (35), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Large corporate bank, HR Business Analyst)

The quote from Suzanne reveals that from her intersectional locality of Black African New Affluent worker she can draw on careerist and empowerment discourses to diminish the impact of the discriminatory event. Discourses of fairness, were also drawn on to justify manager's behaviours, as experienced by Anna from her white middle class position;

I could see it from my managers point of view. He needs people here fulltime. I think if I was a manager in the business I would expect it to.

In common with the experiences of the women in the previous analysis chapters whereby access to full and part-time was constructed with the ideal worker and careerist discourse, the impact of these fairness based discursive practices is to silence or diminish the effect of gender in managerial decisions.

I think you can try and look for another explanation but usually the best person for the job will get it. (Mandy (35), British Black- African, A new affluent worker, Education, HR Manager)

I used to think I was being overlooked for promotion because of the kids. But what I've come to see is I'm in a different gear right now and I am probably not putting myself forward enough. (Christine (39), White British, Middle class, Food manufacturing, HR manager generalist role)

This reflects the experience of Rebecca in the previous analysis section when their professional presentation and behaviour was judged against a gendered middle-class norm. In

addition, as previously explored in this thesis Black-Caribbean and African women in the New Affluent worker categories sought assimilation into the workplace via middle class symbols and channels, such as listening to Radio 4. This individualistic discourse also applied to how the discriminatory behaviours of managers in the business could be tolerated;

> You'll always get one. Saying the wrong thing. I'm just sitting there in interviews praying he doesn't say anything stupid (.) that is going to get us in trouble. We'll send him on the training course (.) again [laughs]. (Isobel (36), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Medium tech company, Talent manager)

> The diversity training here is not really worth bothering with. Its online. We're meant to track who has done it and keep the dashboard updated. Does it make any difference (…) It's hard to see how. But it gets done. (Paula (49), British Black-Caribbean, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Large government department, HR Business analysis with a remint for employee wellbeing)

The multiple discursive positions above between the need to fix individual managers through diversity management training could be seen to be a mask or a quick fix with little actual trust or confidence in such programmes to actually address the real issues. As explored here and in previous chapters the participants are exposed to forms of discrimination but rarely construct them, as such and can adopt multiple discursive positions to avoid doing so.

> Um. I sometimes think it could be you know. I don't know. It's hard. Unless someone calls you a name then how do you know they are discriminating against you (.) (Dee (42), British Black- Africa, Middle class, Medium sized facilities, HR Manager generalist role)

The following quotes reveals hesitation in naming discrimination;

> I know sometimes you hear it all the time. But I do think that I am held back because I am Black. There is something about not letting me progress that little bit more. I think maybe. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

When Elizabeth was asked if she had ever said anything about her concerns this was constructed as jeopardising her relationship with her manager;

> No. No. (.) No I wouldn't. (.) I know what she would think. In the main its fine. We get on.
> EY: would this be something what would make you leave your job?
> Yeah (…) but will I be treated differently anywhere else ? You don't know what it will be like. You always think the grass is greener. But I always think (.) I know everyone here. They know me. I know what is going on. Then you can hope that a change happens. There are always changes going on and then there could be an opportunity for me. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

The above quote highlights the role of the individualistic discourse and blaming the behaviours of one manager in tolerating discriminatory behaviours. The impact of the discourse of discrimination occurring elsewhere is also inscribed here. Rather than challenging the issue of discrimination Elizabeth hopes she can move within the business to a different role, which is preferable to risking conditions outside. Joy constructs in a similar vein the decision to stay within the public sector where she perceives discrimination to be less of a problem;

> I haven't made a lot of career changes. You know (…) Yes you could say I have tended to stay a bit. Laughs. Um. I suppose I have chosen organisations which I know (…) Which you know what to expect. So, sure I could've made more money. But (.) I've got friends in the private sector and it's not always been easy. (Joy (42), British with Caribbean, Middle class, Education, HR Manager generalist role)

The above quotes reveal the impact of discursively constructing discrimination or negative treatment, as happening elsewhere and how this discourse infuses with the individualist managing diversity discourse. For Aida and Adriene they drew on social justice discourse to both resist and tolerate discriminatory behaviours. From the position of Black African first generational immigrants they discussed how their experiences of starting their professional

careers and the support they received meant they wanted to be seen to be treating people fairly and ensuring that everyone had a chance;

> Luckily for me I can speak to these people. I have seen them improve. I don't know (.) I just feel like they don't always know what they are doing. What they are saying. So, they just say stupid things. Like they don't want this women in their team blah blah blah. I tell them it's not like that. Everyone deserves a fair chance. At the end of the day it is my job to say so. (Aida (37), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

> Sometimes I really go out of my way for a candidate. I know what the manager will be thinking. But I'm thinking let's try and give them a chance. I try everything I can to get the best out of them at the interview. (Adriene (41), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, Medium sized waste management company, HR Business partner)

The individualist discourse was also present and inscribed the social justice discourses in Susan's challenge to discriminatory behaviours of a recruiting manager towards an applicant for an interview;

> I said to him that I'm not representing people. I'm just representing one person and that is me. (.) But what you are saying about her (.) You are saying about me. He tried to say it wasn't directed at me. He said 'You are not like her' and I said I don't understand what you mean by that. Obviously, I'm very dark skinned and we looked the same but he thinks that I am Westernised. I said to him it's about you thinking you want to treat someone less favourably because of their skin colour and that is not OK'. (Susan (42), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Banking, Employee relations manager)

The first line of the quote reveals the onus still in the individualistic discourse. The interdiscursivity below reveals the careerist discourse also constructed her subject position in the context of challenging the negative behaviours.;

> I challenged. You have to. But it can change the dynamic (.) I won't allow that to define me. I made sure I went through the next day and deliberately walked past his

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desk to say hello to him. And we are back on a professional level. I could have done that whole thing of 'oh he's a racist'. But I don't think I stand to gain anything from that (.). These people are colleagues (…) So (.) someone is rude to me. Do I care? I have a very full life outside of work and I am not here to make friends.

The tone of her language at the end of the quote is assertive and defiant. The intersectional lens is useful here in understanding how discriminatory behaviours can be tolerated or resisted in the context of how she adopts a range of discourse positions to construct her experience, as not damaging. Susan emphasised how the personal drive and ambition she gained from her family background and what she wanted for her own children meant that she will always find a way to be professional and work around issues.

The following quotes from Paula relate to her formally challenging her performance rating on the grounds of ethnicity;

> Here's the thing (.) Historically in this division people of colour, Black, Asian or Polish they always find themselves in the needs to improve box. The manager he just wanted me to accept it. And I just didn't (.) There was something in me that made me stand up. I was definitely going to speak up. To me is was blatant discrimination. I think I was part of a group that was targeted. (Paula (49), British Black-Caribbean, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Large government department, HR Business analysis with a remint for employee wellbeing)

Paula explains how a grievance was taken out on the ground of her concerns, which she would later win and a review of the department and its performance management processes was implemented. Through the experience she explains other employees contacted her asking if she would support them in similar claims. As the following quote highlights the impact on standing up took such a personal that further action was considered near impossible;

> The thing about discrimination is that it doesn't always feel like harassment when you raise the claim on ground of race. Its afterwards when you are targeted. It was awful. I was targeted after this. Because it was an embarrassment to them. It was one of the worst times of my life. It wasn't so much the grievance case, as I felt confident I would win. It was what came with it (…) You know I was walking on eggshells. Everything I did I was criticized. I was speaking to an outside organisation. If I hadn't

of been I would've had a nervous breakdown. It was literally everything I did was an issue. And because I spoke up about the race thing. It was a blemish for their reputation. I'm not sure I could do it again. [Silence]

8.2 '*HR people are nice*' – how individualistic and unitarist discourses intertwine with doing femininities and masculinities and the impact on role model and mentor identification in the HR profession

Reflecting on the experiences above another discursive practice amongst the participants was the way in which individualistic and unitarist managing diversity discourses intertwined with doing femininities and masculinities to impact their relationships inside and outside of the HR profession. The following quote from Paula exposes the way in which gendered discourses infused with the individualistic and unitarist discourses for managing diversity when exploring the support she received from within the HR department following her grievance experience explored in the previous section;

> Look, the HR department are really nice here. There are nice people in it. But I don't think they believe that racism it taking place here. I don't think they really believe it goes on. Um. I think that they believe I have been treated unfairly (…) Um. But (…) not everyone accepts it is on the grounds of race. Some people feel (.) because they are not of that mindset they find it difficult to believe that other people are (.) so it couldn't happen here. Because they don't think these things happen. Because they are nice people. They find it hard to believe other people are not. (Paula (49), British Black-Caribbean, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Large government department, HR Business analysis with a remint for employee wellbeing)

The hesitation and lack of clarity in the expression of Paula reveals the tentative ways in which she constructed her multiple discursive positions around what was a difficult issue for her. These were her colleagues and was in some ways empathetic to their own discursive struggle for trying to understand the experiences she went through in the presence of the hegemonic diversity discourse that discrimination and negative stereotyping is a thing of the past.

From a similar intersectional position, the below quote reveals how Susan discursively constructed wanting to distance herself from her female manager for siding with the business in discrimination cases, as her manager is perceived as implicit in this;

> The problem is my boss. She's not willing to take a stand. I think the business know that she'll roll over and they can do what they want. I think they know that's not how I would deal with issues. Particularly not discrimination. She is under a lot of pressure. That's why we try and help her out. But it's not great what she does (.) It has an impact on all of us (.)

However, there is also aspects of affiliation in the discursive practice of Susan above, as there is a recognition of the pressure that her boss is under and this can be used in some ways to justify her behaviour. The following analysis also reveals interdiscursivity between an assumption that female managers may be viewed negatively to wanting to showing affiliation, particularly given her own experience of being treated negatively, as explored in the previous chapter by her female manager;

> I see it like I want them to always feel like they can speak to me. I'm not some monster (…) I've got an open door. I am very conscious of what I have been through and what if feels like to be made to feel like you don't fit it. What I try to do with my team is to be available for them. I think you have to give them enough space to develop (.) but not hang them out to dry. (Rebecca (37), White British, Traditional working class, Medium manufacturer and retailer, HR Business partner)

> When I started in HR I had to learn the hard way. My boss wasn't interested. She expected us to get on with it. I learnt a lot. A lot (.) But is wasn't always easy and I felt very vulnerable (.) I felt I was struggling with my English and I had no one to check my work. I'm very conscious of this with my staff. I don't want them to think like they are drowning. (Adriene (41), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, Medium sized waste management company, HR Business partner)

The above quotes highly how the experiences of othering for both Rebecca and Adriene in their careers infused with employee centred discourses of HRM creates the conditions whereby they want to build more positive relations with their team members and direct

reports, compared to some of their own experiences. The second quote above reveals an experience of micro-violence from her first HR manager shapes her practice, as a manager. They also want to be positive role models within the workplace following the way they have been able to progress from non- professional backgrounds and for Adriene with English not being her first language;

> I have been approached to be a mentor as part of the Women's network. It nice to give something back. I like to do it. You know I feel I have come along way. I would never have dreamed I would be doing anything like this. (Adriene (41), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, Medium sized waste management company, HR Business partner)

> I have had people in the team say how much they like working with me and they look up to me. I think they know I am thorough and they can trust me. (Rebecca (37), White British, Traditional working class, Medium manufacturer and retailer, HR Business partner)

Being approached to be a mentor was a source of pride and career commitment. The experiences of the participants also revealed how being a positive role model or behaving in the ways they would always want to, was problematic because of the pressures of managing in the middle, discussed in the previous chapter. For some of the participants the work demands placed on them from the position of being in the middle meant they could not always develop relationships in the way they wanted to;

> We're always asking the rest of the organisation to do things but we forget about it with our own teams. I'm sure my team feel neglected sometime. We're always racing to get everything finished. For everyone else. (Anna (37), White British, Middle-class, Small Investment Bank, HR Business Partner)

> I know we should be walking the walk but it can't always be like that. I think there is spotlight on HR and we can't live up to it. (Ariana (38), White British, Traditional working class, Retail, Employee Relations managers)

Ariana is conscious of how a lack of 'walking the talk' when it comes to implementing the policies and practices that they design and promote can undermine the credibility of the function and them as individuals. But is placed in a difficult position as still having a high volume of work and having members of staff does not necessarily relieve this and instead managing others was often constructed, as another demand in an already pressurised environment inside and outside of work;

> I am trying to find some time at home when I can do their appraisals. There is never a enough time to do it. I want to try and find some time to do it properly but it's hard. (Aida (37), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

> I have got a new girl starting next week. My manager has brought her in to alleviate some of the pressures. But I'm going to have to spend quite a bit of time getting her up to speed. It means more time away from what I need to be doing. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

Elizabeth is conscious of the way in which these pressures impacts her relationships, including communicating abruptly and focusing on team members that she knows 'will just get on with it'. When she raises her concerns and the wider pressures she is under with her manager she is told to just delegate properly;

> I don't think my manager gets it. She is not someone I could talk to easily about any of this any way. Last time I spoke to her she said I should delegate more. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

Negative behaviours from senior women were often justified in terms of the pressures placed on them, this often became constructed in the context of not wanting 'her' job;

> I think it is difficult at this level. But it's much worse for my manager. I wouldn't want her job. They place totally unreasonable demands on her. (Krysle)

I couldn't do her job. I know she absorb a lot of the pressure from the Exc team for us. (Sue)

They would go on to construct pressures of the operating environment at the most senior levels of the organisation justifying behaviours of being short with the team, being distant and overly directive. The gendered context and needing to demonstrate both femininities and masculinities at that level could also account for 'aggressive' behaviours, as they were expected at that level to 'get anything done'. However, the way in which multiple discourses could shift the subject positions of the participants also emerged, as there was also a higher expectation of ethical standards of behaviour from senior women and men in HR, because 'they were HR', which became intertwined with displays of femininity and masculinity;

I get that she has a lot of pressure on her but she needs to make time for her team. It wouldn't hurt just to pop her head in the office and she how we are all doing. Take us for a coffee maybe. (Shauna (35), White Irish, Traditional working class. New affluent worker, Government department, HR Business Partner)

At the end of the day HR's job is about developing people's careers.
She should be role modelling those behaviours. (Auriella (35), British Black-African, Middle class, Banking, HR Business Partner)

Due to the presentation of management and senior leadership, as gender neutral the standards by which senior women are judged within the HR profession often do not take into the account the gendered context of organisations. This was evident in the way in which the participants in this study did not readily acknowledge many senior women (or men) within the profession who they perceived, as a positive role model. Even when attempting to identify potentially positive roles the women would also name negative attributes, such as working long and unsociable hours and unrealistic expectations on their subordinates availability;

Everyone here would have you working 24/7 if you let them. It's difficult when you look up. I'm not sure if I would say that they are roles models. Some of them I think are doing a good job. (Susan (42), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Banking, Employee relations manager)

At the end of the day they're busy. Their priority has to be managing upwards. That has been my experience of senior HR people. I think they can be a bit detached. My manager here is. I don't think she is planning on staying long. She doesn't seem to want to make an effort to get to know us. (Krystle (36), British Black-African, New Affluent worker, Small start-up tech firm, HR Business Partner)

As the participants struggled to name role models within the HR profession there was also an assumption that female role models would either not have children or had older children. There is a gendered assumption of the women in senior roles embodying the masculine ideal for management;

One of the directors in my last job was a role model. She always had time for everyone. The way she handled herself in meetings. She had a calm confidence that just made you feel reassured. Um .You don't get that every day in HR. (Joy (42), British with Caribbean, Middle class, Education, HR Manager generalist role)

I think it's fairly common that HR directors usually don't have kids. I'm just trying to think of who we have working here [runs through name] that does. Or their kids might be older now. (Kate (36), White British, New affluent worker, NHS Trust, HR manager generalist role)

The women construct senior women, in the main, as detached or childless and this could impact the way in which they are viewed as role models. The focus then falls on the way in which the participants identified people in the profession and wider workplace, as a role model.

I have had some really good bosses in my time. When I look back at what I have learnt from working with them. Maybe not role models though. I tend to think of people outside of work, as role models. (Isobel (36), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Medium tech company, Talent manager)

Reflecting the discursive practice of the women throughout this chapter many of the women struggled to identify someone in senior management in HR who they perceived to be a role model. The hesitation in the expressions below reveal this struggle;

> Um role model. Um (…). No. I don't think so. In the profession? I met people at uni that inspired me and still do (.). But role model ? (…) You can learn a lot from most people that come into your life. Even my last boss taught me some important lessons (laughs). I tend to draw strength and inspiration from the people in family. My friends. (Suzanne (35), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Large corporate bank, HR Business Analyst)

> You know my role model. You know my role model would probably be my daughter. She works in HR. I'm proud of her. I am staggered at what she can do juggling the kids and developing her career faster then mine. Um. Otherwise. (.) I don't know. (Elizabeth (49), British Black- Caribbean, traditional working class background but identifies as new affluent worker, Small trading company, HR and training manager)

 The intersectional lens reveals that for the first generational Black Caribbean and African and white women from traditional middle-class backgrounds people that they admired, rather than specific role models, were selected tended to be people that had formed part of their experiences in developing social and economic capital;

> I think it's more about the key people that come into your life at the right time (.) Like the manager at the cleaning company who suggested that I went to university and get my qualifications. He is not my role model. But you could say he has changed my life. (Aida (37), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, NHS Trust HR manager)

> There have been people who really helped me along the way. Some of the women who I started working with I am still in contact with now. We really help each other out. (Adriene (41), British Black-African, New affluent worker, Traditional working class, Medium sized waste management company, HR Business partner)

The women also tended to construct identifying more with people in the HR profession conducting a balanced approach to HRM that took into account the needs of employees. Often this was constructed in terms of them doing the type of HR that they would like to do and often reminded them of why they joined the profession.

> Um (.) I'm findings it hard to think of someone. It might just be where I am working at the moment. Um. (Exhales). I suppose the people I look up to, or the ones I respect are the ones that can handle themselves with senior managers. They don't just roll over. They can remember that there are people involved here too. (Ariana (38), White British, Traditional working class, Retail, Employee Relations managers)

Connected to this position was the way in which Rebecca indicated that the people she had respected most in the profession had tended to be HR contractors. Rebecca indicated that contractors were able to make such a better impression and create real impact at work 'as they could keep out of all the politics'. Rebecca reveals that she wanted to contract in the future, as finds the internal politics to be distracting from her work. Constructing political behaviours, as people working to their own agendas and forming coalitions, which reflects her experiences of 'othering' in the profession. The requirement then to '*play a political game'* to succeed makes the contractor role appealing, as she can be freed of these constraints.

In terms of wider social capital activities such as mentoring the Black Caribbean and Black Africa women were the more likely to say that they had a mentor and generally discussed engaging with a larger range of development behaviours beyond CIPD networking. This was impacted for some women in relation to the nature of the pressures put on them by their middle management roles. Even in these circumstances Aida describes using their commute, as a time when they listen to HR and coaching podcasts and is always looking for new development opportunities;

> You've got to try and find time for it and in different ways. I don't rely on my workplace to give me the development I need.

Continuing professional development was also a theme for the women and real desire to continue to learn;

I guess the only thing for me on the horizon at the moment is we're hoping to have a baby next year. I was thinking that I could use that time off to get another Masters. I am thinking about maybe something in Managing Diversity. Or something like that. (Isobel (36), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Medium tech company, Talent manager)

The above quotes reveal when I ask where her drive to seek out opportunities comes from she responds it is from her the opportunities that she feels she has gained in the UK and wanting to continually improve to show to her family what she can do. There was also a tendency for the black Caribbean and African women to attend more networking events. The women indicated that they attended other business networking events and this was often where they would meet potential mentors, as such the mentors selected did not tend to come from within the HR profession.

No one is going to do it for you. You have to go out and make the most of every opportunity. I have joined some really good business groups. It helps a lot when I am with managers (.) Talking about the business in new ways. I think it helps with them taking me more seriously- on some things ! (Elizabeth, Black Caribbean, From traditional working but identifies a new affluent, Small trading company)

It has really helped. Its helped with dealing with tricky situations at work. It's more like counselling. It helps me stay calmed. I didn't have one for a long time (.) not sure why really. I'd really recommend it (…) I'm not sure if it means I'm going to be HR Director but I was probably never going to be able to do that any way. (Estelle (36), British Black-African, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Medium sized IT consultancy, HR Manager)

The discursive practices reveal that whilst there is a drive to attend the events and some benefits there is some cynicism to relation to the extent to which these career management activities will mean they actually move up in the HR profession and achieve career gains.

8.3 'I want to help' how discourses of ethical and moral HRM support sustainable HR management careers

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This final analysis section brings together a number of discursive themes explored in this thesis and highlights how often the participants, despite various challenges explored in the proceeding chapters, discursively constructed the reason that they joined profession and wanting to stay was that they 'enjoyed helping people' and 'seeing people develop'. The following analysis explores the discursive struggle, impacted by gendered notions of social and moral discourses of being 'too nice' to carve out work that is of value to them and reinforces their commitment to the profession in a sustainable way.

A key theme in the discursive practice of women when discussing why they joined the profession was because they wanted to help people and they enjoyed seeing people develop;

> I know the CIPD wouldn't like you saying this but I wanted to work in HR because I like working with people and like seeing them succeed. (Christine (39), White British, Middle class, Food manufacturing, HR manager generalist role)

> HR is a good fit for me. I like helping people (.) When I allowed to. That's why I loved my first job as I was helping people all day. (Isobel (36), Black Caribbean, New affluent worker, Medium tech company, Talent manager)

Evident in their discursive practice was the way in which the business orientation discourse inscribes their talk. The dominant discourse acts to diminish the ability to stay in the subject position of a people centred approach to HR. Helping and wanting to developing people also creates a site of gender tension for the women. 'Helping' is positioned, as strategically weaker within the profession, which is something that inflected the talk of the participants;

> Look (.) I think most people come into HR because they want to help people. It's about trying to make a positive difference in people's lives. When I know I can't find a way of doing that in a role (.) I'll move. The last job I had was horrendous. All archaic policies and people were really unhappy. I knew there was only so much I could there, as the managers were not going to change. I moved on as I knew I couldn't make a difference. So I know it might not be the strategic thing to say (.) but I'll stay if I know I can make a positive different. (Dee (42), British Black- Africa, Middle class, Medium sized facilities, HR Manager generalist role)

In a similar way Suzanne and Janet drew on wanting to help people beyond the work place, as part of their career in HR profession and drew on social justice and moral discourses to construct this position;

> What I love about working in HR is that you can be one step ahead (.) So you can learn a lot about business. And. What I love is when my friends ask me to help them with job applications or I help with their kids with UCAS applications. I'm doing it with my own kids already. Knowing what direction businesses are going in. It helped me pick my sons school. You can get a lot back from HR. (Janet (40), Black Caribbean, New Affluent worker, Banking, HR manager)

> What I really want to do and I am trying to find a way of making this happen at work is to set up a scheme where we go into schools and I can talk about working in the city. I want to do here in X as that's where it's needed. I think they'll listen to me because I am from here so I understand how they think (.) That's what's good about HR. There is scope for things like this (.) If you ask the right manager. (Suzanne (35), British Black- African, New affluent worker, Large corporate bank, HR Business Analyst)

They love HR for what they perceive it to actually stand for when applied properly and away from the business case with a greater on people;

> I absolutely do love it. Um. What I do now I am working in wellbeing and I really love wellbeing as it's all about building people up. You know having conversations with people about what they need. I'm feeling really good about this job. (Paula (49), British Black-Caribbean, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Large government department, HR Business analysis with a remint for employee wellbeing)

> You know when I am happiest at work is when I see the new graduates starting. I go down to their induction and try and spend a bit of time with them. My colleagues think I am mad. But at the end of the day what are we here for? I don't just to know

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everyone by their payroll number on a spreadsheet. (Sue (49), White British, Traditional working class, Retail banking, OD Manager)

I don't know when wanting to help people became such a dirty word. I think we need to get back to trying to focusing on the needs of people and trying to give it to them. (Estelle (36), British Black-African, New affluent worker from traditional working-class background, Medium sized IT consultancy, HR Manager)

This interdiscursivity was witnessed in the other analysis chapters, where the participants seek to balance the persuasiveness of the commercial HR professional discourse with more ethical and sustainable discourses. There is an awareness of the discursive problems associated with being nice but resistance to the dominant commercial textscape.

8.4 Summary
The final analysis section reveals some of the inherent tensions in the HR profession still at play, as the women try to carve out ethical and moral activities within their careers that support their commitment and motivation to stay in the profession. This chapter has explored the way in which managing diversity discourses have shaped the career management experiences of the participants. It has revealed the complex discursive process that take place in resisting and tolerating discrimination. The way in which masculinities and femininities shape intra-gender relations within the HR profession and subsequent career management experiences from different intersectional localities has also been explored.

The focus on their shifting subjective positions based on the ceaseless interplay of discourses, in tension and in combination with each, other reveals how the career management practices and choices for HR middle managers through the intersectional lens are complex. A range of dominant theoretical approaches within the domain of HRM and career management have been contested, including the mainstream HRM unitarist approach, the business case for managing diversity and the new career models that emphasize choice and values-driven at the heart of their approaches. Exposing the hegemonic discursive practices at play in these dominant approaches that emphasize individualistic and unitarist discourses contributes to how inequality in career outcomes can occur, particularly when the socio-historical and economic conditions that create inherent power differentials are not considered.

CHAPTER 9 Discussion

9.1 Introduction

This thesis aimed to analyse the role of dominant discourses in the career management experiences of female middle managers in the (HR) profession through a feminist poststructuralist and intercategorical intersectional lens (McCall, 2005). The overarching research question addressed was;

How do dominant professional and gendered discourses within the HR profession shape the career management experiences of female middle managers at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, class?

Given the underpinning philosophies of the research, in order to answer this question particular attention is paid to the ways in which the hegemonic discourses work in combination and tension when employed at the intersection of gender, ethnicity and class. At these discursive locations, sites of resistance to the hegemonic discourses can be identified. In this chapter the links between the findings and existing research is explored to understand the contribution of the research to theoretical and practical knowledge. This will be addressed in the context of how the findings presented in the previous chapters answer and address the research question and specific objectives of the research. The main contributions to existing knowledge in relation to the career management experiences of middle managers in the HR profession will then be critically examined.

The following discussions of the findings in the context of previous literature and in addressing the overarching research question and objectives is conducted within the intercategorical intersectional and feminist poststructuralist paradigms of the research. As is the case with participants in this research the women from different ethnic minorities and traditional lower-class backgrounds already assume what Atewologun and Sealy (2014) described as a 'sometimes privileged' position through their achieved managerial status and professional qualifications. In addition, given men are a minority group and potential 'other' in the feminised concentrated profession of HR (Pullen and Simpson, 2004) the following discussions will highlight the complex ways in which masculinities and femininities play out in the discursive experiences of the participants to explore how privilege and disadvantage is

both maintained and contested in the career management experiences of the women. Previous research had revealed the way in which privilege is experienced amongst ethnic minority female managers is often unconscious and invisible, as attention in diversity research has tended to focus on experiences of disadvantage (Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington, 2016). This research seeks to expose intersectional sites of career management privilege to contribute to debates and knowledge that can advance and improve the career outcomes and experiences of women in the HR profession. The following discussions identify how the overarching research question and research objectives were addressed by exploring the findings in the context of previous literature and theory.

9. 2 Addressing RO 1 - To explore the role of dominant, commercially orientated HR professional discourses on the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

The first research objective was addressed by the findings, which exposed how discourses of commerciality in the HR profession impacted the development of social capital, training and development opportunities within the profession and discursive practices associated with wanting to opt in and out of their HR careers. The following discussions will reveal the contrasting sites of privilege and disadvantage through alternative discursive practices that occur at that the fluid intersectional lens of gender, ethnicity and class.

9.2. 1 Social capital gains for career advantage impacted by the HR commerciality discourse

The findings presented in this thesis support the position that the ongoing quest for commercial legitimacy and the historical feminisation of the HR profession creates a specific gendered context within the profession. The commercial imperative in the HR profession emerges from the 'credibility' problem historically associated with the function due to its perception, as a 'female domain' (Legge, 1985) and 'new' managerial professional status (Watson, 2002). There has always been an imperative for HR professionals to demonstrate added value to the bottom line but this has been re-emphasised by structural changes inspired by the Ulrich Model (1997) that sought to make the HR profession '*more strategic*' and to become a '*genuine partner to the business'.* This has led to the commercial interests of the business, dominating the HR professional textscape (Francis and Keegan, 2010). The

discourse of 'being commercial' is inherently gendered due to the dominance of the hegemonic nature of white, middle class masculine culture and dialogue at the top of organisations where commercial and strategic activities occur (Mavin and Gandy, 2012).

Hegemonic gendered norms associated with women's work were used in the discursive practices of the participants. Pullen and Knights (2007: 505) explored how doing gender in organisations becomes so routine and automatic that is conceals its precariousness. The gendered talk would place the participants in a servicing role to the business. Previous research exploring discourse analysis and identity construction amongst HR professionals in the public sector has revealed the use of gendered and sexualised discourses in their interactions with other organisational actors. Gendered identities of mothering, wives and girlfriends were discursively constructed in the context of the subservient relationship that HR had with the wider business and as a tool for relationship building (Kinsey, 2012). These gendered discourses were interdiscursively constructed by the participants with policing or servicing discourses that are a historical legacy of the professionalisation project. The participants however, could resist the dominant discourse of servicing to position themselves more powerfully in terms of building social relations for career gains. Some of the participants also demonstrated that they knew they were playing the game in terms of their discursive practices of servicing and they were ultimately constructing wanting to move to a more strategic relationship with the business.

This has significant implications for career management, as when HR managers operate as service providers to the business, little social capital gains are achieved due to reduced opportunities for two-way communication. Gubbins and Garavan (2015) suggest that HR professionals need extensive 'extrafunctional and extraorganisational relationships' ideally with senior people for career success. It is argued that the strategic resources and information that these organisational actors can provide is more influential in terms of career advancement and positive outcomes then resources gained from social capital activities within the HR profession itself (Gubbins and Garavan, 2015).The findings reveal the way in which dominant gendered discourses can trap the participants in "conventional meanings and modes of being" (Davies, 1990, p. 1), as the participants would adopt domesticity and helping discourses. This created discursive tension, as there was also recognition amongst the participants that these expectations of behaviour may do little to improve their career development because of the gendered context and the way in which transactional work is

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viewed. Particularly from the location of middle manager where they experience being pressurized by demands from above and below and not always finding time to develop their strategic role in the way that they like. The findings, highlight the lack of autonomy and self-regulation that is assumed to be part of a professional status and reveals the way in which autonomy is contingent on the establishing a cultural legitimacy with those surrounding and influencing the profession (Fourneir, 2002: 117), which is something the HR profession is still struggling with (Watson, 2010).

 Whilst the commercial discourse is dominant the findings reveal the complex multiple discourse positioning in relation to how social relations within the business can be managed for career management gains within this dominant textscape. The complexity of the discursive positioning relates to the continued presence of inherent tensions that still exist within the profession and have been identified previously by Legge (1987) and Guest and King (2004). These findings also reflect ongoing issues of strategic legitimacy within the HR function. Recent large-scale survey data suggests that the ways in which the HR function is viewed as a genuine strategic partner by the organisation will have a significant impact on HR careers (Personnel Today, 2017). Credibility issues have long dogged the profession (Legge, 1995). Construction and connotations of what it means to be strategic continue to pose challenges for the women's careers in the HR profession. The participants discursively struggled with what could be described as strategic HR and non-strategic HR activities. Caldwell (2004) suggests that attempts at trying to separate transactional HR from strategic HR is problematic, as all management involves important aspect of 'doing'. Helping or wanting to develop people was discursively constructed as 'being non-strategic' and whilst the participants commonly constructed this, as the reason they joined the profession, the impact of needing to show credibility in 'strategic' terms could silence that discourse. This does call into question previous literature that suggest HR professionals will use discourses simply or cynically in the pursuit of status and power (Legge, 1978). Indeed, the participants often tried to distance themselves from what was constructed, as being political and manoeuvring for social capital gains.

 The intersectional lens further illuminates the multi- subject positioning from the use of the commerciality discourse. A number of the black Caribean and African participants from working class backgrounds discursively constructed how they drew on experiences from their non-professional working lives and constructed these positively in the context of improving

social relations for career gains within the HR profession. This often related to previous clerical or numbers work. A common discourse in the HR profession, connected to the commercial and credibility discourse of delivering for the business in terms of the bottom line, is the need for HR professionals to be better at numbers and quantitatively, data driven. The value of the HR function should come through proving numbers and metrics (Tootell et al, 2009). The women identified how they 'could be trusted with numbers' and had developed social capital from this position. This has connotations with Sabelis and Schilling (2013) frayed career perspective where career paths have ebbs and flows and experiences are gained from twists and turns. This also reveals the sometimes-privileged position of ethnic minority women and the way in which they can mobilise professional resources to position themselves more powerfully in the context of managing social relations in the HR profession and rebalancing the impact of the commercial discourse in HR.

The intersectional analysis also revealed how women at the intersect of marginalised social groups can experience privilege and disadvantage simultaneously. As the role of metrics and numbers was also discursively constructed negatively in terms of career terms, when they themselves or other employees were treated as a disposable resource. This reflects some of the inherent tensions in the profession, in relation to HR's role of being both on the side of management and supporting employees. This dual servicing of relationships may pose challenges to the development of valuable social capital for HR professionals (Gubbins and Garavan, 2015), which then ultimately impacts their career outcomes. But the dual tension also impacts the agency and choice, which are argued to be the heart of new models of career self-management (Akkermans and Kubasch, 2017). The participants discursively construct feeling vulnerable and needing to 'sit it out' whilst changes occurred to the organisation and the nature of their work. These findings support other literature that has criticised overly positivistic accounts of free choice in models of female careers (Shablis and Schilling, 2013). Tensions with the commerciality discourse also occurred when they felt they were unable to help employees and they were being treated as a 'number' or resource within the organisation. This created tensions with why they had joined the HR profession, which was usually expressed in terms of wanting to help people. The desire to want to help and support other people is a common form of career calling (Duffy and Dix, 2013). The participants used ethical and moral discourses to construct how they had joined the profession to support and develop people but this was often at odds with their actual experiences. This could lead to

wavering levels of commitment to their careers and feelings of embarrassment when discussing their HR career with social relations outside of the profession.

9.2.2 Training and development opportunities limited by the dominant commerciality HR discourse

A large-scale survey of HR professionals revealed what they described, as a surprisingly high number of HR professionals do not have access to the learning opportunities that they need (CIPD, 2018). The discussion presented here also identified how the participants felt training and development opportunities were not readily available in the profession. The accumulation of 'human capital' via training and development is closely aligned to new theories of career management, such as the protean career (Briscoe and Hall, 2006). However, with the emphasis in these models on the individual carving out experiences and accessing opportunities, this results in the underlying power structures in the profession being left unchallenged. In this respect the question of who and why individual's get opportunities, in relation to essential career management experiences, such as training and development is not fully addressed by these models (Broadbridge, 2015). The findings presented in this thesis identify how power structures can be maintained through hegemonic discourses, as the participants discursively constructed avoiding training opportunities due to costs associated with training for themselves and their teams. Their experiences were interdiscursively constructed with the HR strategic legitimacy and commerciality discourse, as considerable concern was expressed in relation to how it would look to the wider business if HR was receiving training at times of financial constraint.

However, exposing the intersectional experiences is important for understanding how from the position of 'other' sources of career privilege can emerge. For some of the women from black African and Caribbean and traditional working-class backgrounds they discursively conducted being blocked from training opportunities on commercial grounds but go on to construct these experiences in positive career gain terms. They draw on self-confidence and a drive to succeed discourse, which are identified enablers in female career advancement (Broadbridge, 2015), to discursively construct the experience positively and as motivation to drive their own training and development. Previous research through the intersectional lens reveals the positive career management experiences that can take place at the position of other, as Sang, A-Dajani and Ozbilgin (2013) reveal belonging to multiple groups of

marginalisation does not automatically mean multiplied disadvantage. Even when the experiences of being denied training were infused with discursive concern for being discriminated against, participants gave managers the benefit of the doubt and the experiences were re-constructed to focus on the benefits that could be gained from driving their own training needs. These experiences relating to training and development reveal the complex discursive positions at the intersectional lens and also supports previous literature relating to subtler form of racism, which can cause ethnic minority managers and professionals to tolerate discriminatory behaviours (Van Laer and Jannsens, 2015).

The sites of resistance at the intersectional lens to the dominant discourses reveal the importance of self-drive and self-management, which are also considered important personal characteristics in models of female career development (Broadbridge, 2015). Whilst denial of training and development opportunities could have been discursively framed around discrimination and disadvantage, instead a site of privilege and opportunity is constructed. This notion of active self-direction is key feature of the protean career management approach and new models of female of careers (Broadbridge, 2015). The intersectional lens exposes the conditions under, which self-management and the ability to seize opportunities can be realised from the position of 'other'. Whilst career enhancement choices, particularly in the context of paying for training, still reflects a level of privilege that is not accessible to all (Blustein et al, 2015) the participants are also drawing on other forms of privilege from the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class in relation to self-determination and belief that they gain from their social backgrounds.

9.2.3 Commercially discourses and implications for choice and opting out of careers

The dominant commercial discourse in the HR profession influenced the discursive practices of the participants in relation to career management choices and 'opting out' in complex ways. The discourse of commercially competed with the HR people-oriented discourse when experienced at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class and dependent on social interactions in a given context, reveals how the commercial discourse could also shift the powerfulness of the speaker in the context of their career management experiences. Often this was in the context of how they discursively constructed wanting to work in the profession with friends and relations outside of the profession. The career management experiences connected to how they discursively constructed working for the profession amongst their external social networks. Previous research has revealed how relationships outside of the

professional environment have been shown to be influential in shaping women's attitudes and experiences to career management and progression (Beauregard, 2007). From traditional white middle class backgrounds some of the participants found the commerciality discourses uncomfortable when with external social relations and they discursively constructed working in HR to feel embarrassing due to its focus on commercial not people goals. These issues emerged, as the participants discussed potentially opting out of the profession and wanting to do something more creative or fulfilling. As evidenced in the findings chapter the intersectional lens reveals the ways in which privilege and disadvantage can be experienced simultaneously. In addition, for some of the participants from non-professional backgrounds the social relations and the commerciality discourse enhanced their desire to stay in the profession and they experienced being positioned powerfully. Yet, the intersectional lens also reveals how the silencing of expectations in relation to opportunities to progress from the positions that were not traditional middle class and white would be limited and would require working harder than their peers. The space for alternative discourses in relation to structural changes and exposing the power relations that could challenge this position is also closed.

The literature on female career management emphasizes the discourse of opting out, as a choice for women or a 'natural' part of the cycle of female careers (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006). However, the degree of 'choice' in relation to the extent to which, opting out is a reality for most women has been challenged (Lewis and Simpson, 2015). The intersectional lens in this research demonstrates the complex ways in which choice to opt out is constructed. For many of the participants from non-professional backgrounds when they were unhappy with the encroachment of the commerciality discourse there was a discursive expectation of having to 'sit it out' rather than a more proactive choice to opt out. There is a legacy of feeling threatened due to economic security posed by social class, even for people occupying new middle-class positions, such as New Affluent Worker status (Savage et al, 2013). The commercial discourse in HRM could create a precarious and more powerless position for the women and calls into questions the appropriateness of models of career management that are designed around choice and personal adjustment and growth (Blustein et al, 2015). The ability to freely choose a career path that includes opting out in all its guises is particularly difficult for individuals that experience regular discrimination and have been exposed to hardships in relation to daily economics of survival (Blustein, 2006).

9.2.4 Summary

This feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis reveals the way in which femininities and masculinities are done and undone (Butler, 2004) to gain credibility and social capital gains within the presence of the hegemonic commercial and business-oriented discourse in the HR profession. Dominant gendered and commercial discourses are powerful in trapping the participants talk in hegemonic understandings of women and men's work in the HR profession, which can undermine and contribute to attempts at building credibility and social capital gains. The intersectional analysis reveals how social capital gains can be achieved from positions that have traditionally been assumed to marginalised but also how the imperative for commercial gains can also undermine the women's options and security within the profession, highlighting the way in which privilege and disadvantage can be experienced simultaneously.

9.3. Addressing RO 2 - To explore how gendered careerist and motherhood discourses shape the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

 The above research objective was addressed through identifying the complex discursive positioning that took place at the intersectional lens in relation to career management experiences shaped by discourses of respectable business femininity, the ideal worker and intensive parenting, as the following discussions explore.

9.3.1 Needing to look the part for career gains

The findings address RO 2 by revealing how business femininity discourses shaped expectations in relation to how the participants should look and present at work for career gains. The discursive experiences of the women supported other studies of professional women that reveal the way in which women construct degrees of conformity to an understanding of dominant elite groups' ways of both looking and behaving and that these carry gender, ethnicity and class-based assumptions (Haynes, 2008). Professional demeanour in terms of how someone speaks, presents, dresses and behaves has been revealed to be a closure mechanism that can marginalise and exclude individuals that fall outside of the accepted professional image (Haynes, 2012). Previous research has also identified the importance of dressing professionally and needing to be considered attractive to advance female careers through social

capital gains. For those not fitting the Western standards of 'how to look' in a profession this has been shown to be problematic for building successful career networks that can support career progression and success (Castro and Holvino, 2016). These studies have shown how physical demeanour is constructed in female professionals in accordance with perceived expectations of looking and being professional that involves emphasising gravitas and appropriate dress and body language in the context of exposure to internal and external clients (Haynes, 2012: 7). There was evidence of the participants assimilating and moving towards dominant elite groups ways of being and presenting. As seen in other new managerial professions this assimilation has tended to emphasize a middle-class stereotype of respectability and decorum (Haynes, 2008 and 2012).

 The participants expectation for presentation and behaviour in this research was often framed around a middle class ideal, which was discursively created through social relations with others. These discussions also highlighted how whilst gender and class can be named positively or negatively in the context of building social relations for career gains, ethnicity is never named as a source of privilege by the participants. Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington (2016) stress that the absence of naming whiteness 'is a signal of its presence' and reinforces the neutrality of discourses of leadership and leaders despite leaders being judged against essentially the Western white, masculine concepts of the 'ideal worker'. The doing and undoing of femininities and masculinities through the intersectional lens thus reveals the way in which class symbols are significant in professional settings, and as the following discussions reveal in combination with gender and ethnicity create expected standards of professional demeanour and appearance (Castro and Holvino, 2016). Impression management techniques have been identified, as significant for professional women in order to find sponsors and role models that can help their careers (Kumra and Vinnicombe, 2010). It is common in leadership literature to present the experiences of women and ethnic minorities, as needing to overcome barriers in order to progress (Wyatt and Silvester, 2015).

In looking for ways to assimilate it was also evident that respectable business femininity discourses influenced the discursive practices of the women, as they 'toned down' their professional interactions and often sought to maintain a professional distance within the workplace, which is evident in other studies of ethnic female professionals (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006). The use of being professional was reinforced consistently, as a means of creating distance and assimilation. Other studies of professional women reveal how they are

conscious of their lack of fit and alter their self-presentation and adjust accordingly (Haynes, 2012). The intersectional lens reveals how for some of the Black Caribbean and Black African women, particularly from first generational immigrant status it appeared that they still experienced othering despite doing everything to embody what it means to be 'professional'. Whilst previous research has revealed how professional women use their bodies, as a vehicle for conformity to gendered social norms (Haynes, 2008), the findings of this research reveal, whilst accepting and conforming to the discursive image of the professional body it can still act as a closure mechanism in the face of existing gender, ethnicity and class power relations. This relates to how the findings also contribute to previous research, which identified the unspeakabilty of inequality. An example of this from the findings was when participants used silences after trying to justify being 'too professional'. Kegan (2014) suggested silences in intersectional studies are revealing, as they expose the 'unspeakability of inequality' and calls for more attention in intersectional studies to expose what cannot be said.

These findings extended the critique of others who have exposed the need to move away from professional discourses that require women from non-dominant elite groups to fit into a narrow image of an ideal worker (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006 and Castro and Holivio, 2016) both in terms of looks and behaviour, for career gains. In this respect the illusiveness for many women in the profession of ever achieving the ideal professional demeanour is evident here through intersectional experiences and silences.

9.3.2 Ideal workers, motherhood and discourses of a good careerist

The findings of this research make an important contribution to literature that has called for a greater understanding of how femininities and masculinities are performed in feminised professions (Macdonald, 2013). The findings of this research highlight how femininities and masculinities are performed in complex and interdiscursive ways at the intersectional lens. A key way in which this manifested was through discourses used to construct part time working. Whilst previous research has highlighted how women working part-time are not less career orientated (Lane, 2004), there was a powerful assertion amongst the participants that part time working would mean limitations to their careers. The gendered notion of the ideal worker and needing to be committed in a full-time capacity for career gains, shaped the

discursive experiences of the women. Part-time working has been identified, as a main barrier to advancing professional and managerial careers (Crompton and Lynotte, 2015).

Part-time work is constructed by the participants, as stepping off, or out into something less available and committed to the business. The poststructuralist feminist lens applied here reveals the complex positioning of 'choice', which involves both the imposition and active take-up of the gendered conditions of existence (Butler, 2004). White middle-class women demonstrated considerable tensions in their discursive practice, as they sought to justify why they had worked part-time when their children were younger. Argued to be embedded within the Western cultural notion of the natural and exclusive location of the best child care being with the mother, feminist poststructuralist studies have revealed how despite the number of mothers in work increasing, how they are judged is in relation to the active/intensive motherhood discourse, which means their work is detracting them from their natural job of mother (Walls, 2013). This was evidenced in the discursive struggles of the women from traditional middle-class backgrounds.

 The intersectional lens reveals how Black Caribbean and African women from working class backgrounds constructed working full time differently. Their talk focused on both the necessity for working full time but also was constructed in self-drive and careerist attitudes. In particular there was a recognition that having achieved so much in their careers they did not want to give up the positions they had achieved, which could be risked through part time work. The professions have traditionally provided a pathway to middle-class status and more secure employment (Hearn, 1982), particularly for minority or underrepresented groups. This is primarily, as even the semi or new managerial professions, offer the perception of greater control, autonomy and rewards compared to non-professional jobs (Sokoloff, 1992). The findings highlight how a careerist attitude develops from not wanting to give up the status and financial position gained.

 Discourses of careerists and ideal worker also played an important role in relation to how other women were judged within the profession. For example, female HR directors or senior women were constructed, as being childless or less maternal in the discursive practice of the women. This is a common discourse associated with women in senior management (Newton and Wood, 2006). In doing so, the women questioned if by occupying more senior HR roles, could the right commitment to the family and respectable femininity be made. In support of

the kaleidoscope model the choices of the women were shaped by what could be a loss of authenticity (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006). Previous studies have highlighted how the widely held discourse of the difficulties of combining senior jobs with any quality family life is commonly understood even in organisations with a strong equality and diversity agenda (Liff and Wood, 2001). Interestingly even in the HR profession which is heavily embedded in the ethos of the equality and agenda, a threat is still posed by senior roles in relation to maintaining authenticity and work and home balance. The findings presented in this thesis support previous research, which has shown how stereotype threat has been seen in the experiences of women in other managerial pipelines (Ezzeden, Budworth and Baker (2015).

The ideal worker (Acker, 1994) discourse and associated discursive practices have been used to explain why the glass ceiling has been so slow to eradicate, as women are caught in the paradoxical position of needing to demonstrate the careerist and leadership behaviours that are perceived as stereotypical masculine, whilst at the same time maintaining the wider social and cultural norms of being a women/mother. This complexity is revealed in the way in which careerist and home-centred discourses inscribe and inflect with each other in the talk of the participants, as the women are able to position themselves in powerful and powerless positions in the context of their career management experiences.

9.3.3 Pressure to manage in the middle and career gains

 The ideal worker discourse also created pressures and tensions on the participants in terms of enhanced work load and invisible work. The discourse of professional status is associated with its historical context of enhanced individual and social wellbeing (Muzio and Tomlinson, 2012). Yet, the experiences of the participants in this research demonstrate through the intersectional lens the simultaneity of privilege and disadvantage that can occur from newly acquired professional status.

 The participants identified the extent of work that they need to complete at home on top of their normal working hours. The concept of invisible work has traditionally been applied to the types of unpaid labour that women perform. However, there is no concrete definition of invisible work but the literature highlights the significance of work being physically out of sight, ignored or overlooked (Hatton, 2017). As is the case for the participants with emerging middle-class status the discursive practice of maintaining the ideal worker coupled with managing family life, resulted in conducting paid invisible work that needed to be kept

hidden. These experience support and provide a qualitative context to research by the CIPD (2018) that reveals HR professionals think the work can have detrimental impact on their well-being and whilst they can work flexibility they also experience working during leave periods and outside of their agreed hours.

Inter-discursivity is evident here with the ideal worker and business femininity discourse merging. Previous research has highlighted the negative impact maintaining gendered ideals of professional presentation can have on female professional's well-being and career outcomes, as they push through tiredness and pain to maintain the image of the gendered ideal professional (Haynes, 2012). The findings chapters of this thesis reveal the impact of gendering processes that take place in the discursive practices of the participants in the context of physically managing in the middle whilst seeking to gain the best experience to develop their career. The intersectional lens reveals the impact of the discursive struggle of needing to gain more experience verses being 'dumped on', as the strategic legitimacy of the HR middle management role is still not achieved and positive and negative career management outcomes can then emerge. This position is intensified by the professional discourse of needing 'HR generalist' experience to progress. This is a common discourse in the HR profession for progressing a successful career (Cooke, 2006 and Tamkin et al, 2006). The majority of the participants used the importance of gaining generalist experience, as a significant discourse for career management gains within the HR profession and yet their use of silences and competing discourse highlighted how there was cynicism in relation to how it might improve their career experiences. Providing another example of Kelan's (2014) unspeakability of inequality.

 There was also evidenced in relation to how gender is performed through discourse in the professions. The aspects of domesticity in the talk of the participants and the 'looking after' the business in a maternal manner highlights the gendered way in which being an HR generalist was constructed. Pullen and Knights (2007) exposes professional interactions, as localities for where gender and gendering processes can go unnoticed or disavowed due to the way doing and undoing gender are performed routinely and unknowingly. The use of the gendered 'available' and 'tidying up' discourses are expressed even in discursive practices of trying to distance themselves from the generalist position and competing discourses that highlight the limitations of generalist experience for both impression management and

subsequent career gains. Withstanding the significant feminisation within the profession, the profession has also been associated, as being feminine due to its welfare and support function roots (Legge, 1995). Previous research has exposed the role gendered discourses, associated with being a good wife or mother play in the discursive practices of HR practitioners in the context of seeking to maintaining good relations and credibility with the business (Kinsey, 2012). However, whilst this was evident in the talk of the participants there was also evidence of considerable contradictions in their discursive practices, as the recognition that behaving in a servicing or generalist way to the business would ultimately prevent genuine careers gains.

As the previous analysis chapter explored, the gendered reality of trying to build credibility within the profession is paradoxically experienced, as women seek to build HR experience, when men can be parachuted into more senior roles without needing to follow this path. The aspects of domesticity in the talk of the participants and the 'looking after' the business in a maternal manner highlights the gendered way in which being an HR generalist was constructed. These conflicting discourses are evident in the talk of the participants, which reflects the power of dominant discourses and sites of resistance whereby the women discursively construct generalist experience negatively and positively and being discursively conscious of the need to distance themselves from the feminised stereotypes within the profession

 The discursive experience of being dumped on was also experienced as inter-gender micro-aggression. Participants constructed the constant drip feeding of more work without any recognition in career damaging terms. Previous research exploring micro-aggressions in the workplace highlight how their experiences could be considered acts of micro-aggression, as they were experienced in a continuous and constant way that lead to frustrations and reduced self-esteem (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014: 443). Previous research on emotionality within the HR profession suggests that being female is associated with conveying a positive and attitude, while at the same time suppressing negative, in order not to jeopardise workplace relations (Simpson and Lenior, 2003). The discursive regulation of feelings, as evident in the talk of the participants in the frustration for extra work and being denied opportunities but still needing to show positive emotions of enthusiasm and willing, has been shown in previous research to be emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). Emotional labour and emotional regulation in the HR profession is an under-researched area, which is somewhat surprising given the range of emotional regulation activities HR managers engage (Wargnier, 2015). This analysis reveals the discursive construction of needing to regulate their emotional

experiences, in order to maintain effective social relations within the workplace for career gains.

These findings reveal the ways in which career choices can be constrained or curtailed by the dominant discourses of the ideal worker (Acker, 1990) and respectable femininity in a number of ways (Mavin and Grandy, 2016). Expectations of opting-out of full-time work after having children through the intersectional lens reveals alternative discursive practices based around careerist attitudes and a drive to succeed based on socio-economic conditions. Associated with this was how the intensive mothering discourse can shape perceptions of senior women the HR profession and the desirability of their roles. Looking up into more senior roles is a complex discursive process that includes how 'available' the roles are and the impact this would have the women's work home balance. Intra-gender relationships are also revealed, as significant with expectations of a middle-class standard by which the women should seek assimilate to, which cause women from outside of the white, middle class to experience being the 'other.' The requirement for HR generalist experience in terms of career management gains is explored through alternative discursive practices, where this is constructed, as 'doing anything' and could create pressurised conditions at odds with effective career planning. Under the pressure of the generalist role and different intersectional localities participants revealed the impact of invisible work and emotional labour from the pressures of performing in the middle.

9.4 Addressing RO 3 - To examine the role of dominant managing diversity discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

Exploring the ways in which women from an intersectional lens experience discrimination and how it is sought to be managed is an under researched area (Wyatt and Silvester, 2015). Gaining insights into how shifting subject position are created through discourse develops an understanding of how discriminatory behaviours are tolerated and resisted. The findings that explored the role of individualistic and business case dominant diversity discourses had a significant impact on the career management experiences of the participants, particularly in relation to how they justified negative and discriminatory behaviours in relation to their progression and promotion. The discourses were persuasive in the talk of the participants, which reflects how the business case for managing diversity has dominated the textscape in

the HRM profession for the last 20 years (Knights and Omanovic, 2016). Individualistic and unitarist discourses were evident in the talk of the participants, which emphasises individual difference compared to social group-based difference, as the cause of inequality in organisations (Kirton and Green, 2016: 8). The participants constructed negative treatment as happening elsewhere in the organisation or in other sectors. They also constructed discrimination as a thing of the past and colleagues in the HR profession as being 'nice'.

Whilst some have claimed that subtle acts of discrimination need to be explored (Van Laer and Jannsens, 2011) this experience highlights how overt discrimination is still present and can be tolerated. Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) highlighted how discourses of individualisation can be normalised to depoliticize gender, ethnic and class discrimination within organisations. As explored here and in previous chapters the participants are exposed to forms of discrimination but rarely construct them as such and can adopt multiple discursive positions to avoid doing so. Large survey data reveals that Black and Asian employees are more likely than those from a white British backgrounds to say they are experiencing discrimination (CIPD, 2017). These findings are in common with this research. Tentativeness in naming discrimination highlights how it can be both overt and covert (Harris and Ogbona, 2016). Previous research has shown how individuals often avoid identifying forms of racism due to the potential negative backlash of labelling someone, as a racist or sexist within the workplace (Van Laer and Janseens, 2011). The difficult experiences of participants after naming discrimination reinforces this position.

The findings of this thesis provide support for Harris and Ogbona (2016) position that the problem with the current thinking on managing diversity grounded in individualistic approaches is that it supports the notion that racism is a thing of the past. The findings also lend support to Kelan (2014) who identified this practice in her study of young professionals whereby they constructed discrimination, as taking place elsewhere and as a thing of the past. Adopting the discursive position of having not experienced discrimination reveals the problematic nature of how discrimination manifests in organisations and how minority groups construct experiences, as such. This is potentially damaging to career management experiences, as choices are curtailed to avoid the discursive perceptions of discrimination happening elsewhere.

The use of the merit-based discourses helps to address the problematic issue of the women experiencing discrimination 'elsewhere' but not to them. Meritocracy is a discourse in mainstream HRM to present 'a level playing field.' Perceived, as gender, ethnicity and class neutral it can hide or mask differential outcomes based on structural inequalities (Simpson, Ross-Smith and Lewis, 2010). The unitarist assumption is evident in discursive practice, as it helps to construct unequal access to jobs and working fulltime, as normal and unproblematic. In doing so, the underlying power structures within the profession remain intact and unaddressed (Alvesson and Deetz, 2005).

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The individualistic diversity discourse also manifested in the way in which the participants constructed needing to fix individual managers who demonstrated discriminatory behaviours rather than challenging biased structural systems. The multiple discursive positions of the participants between the need to fix individual managers through diversity management training could be seen to be a mask or a quick fix with little actual trust or confidence in such programmes to actually address the real issues. The cynicism in the managing diversity strategy can be seen, which have been demonstrated to be act of micro- emancipation to the dominant hegemonic discourse and prevents ethnic minority employees being portrayed as being simply controlled by organisations (Zanoni and Janseens, 2007).

In this context there is an onus on the individual to assimilate rather than challenge biased structural systems (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006) and relates to assumptions relating to more subtle or covert forms of discriminations being common place in organisations (Van Laer and Janssens, 2011). The presence of the individualistic diversity discourse curtails opportunities for wider challenges to the power structures that cause discriminatory behaviours (Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). However, as the negative experiences of participants that did stand up to challenge power on the basis of discriminatory behaviours reveals; there can be considerable

personal costs in terms of career and personal wellbeing in seeking wider emancipatory goals. These experiences previous research that reveals that challenges to dominant discourses in the context of diversity and discrimination are often only fragmented and temporal (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007, p. 1395).

Also evident in the discursive practice was how social justice approaches to diversity management were drawn upon to resist discriminatory behaviours and acts of micro emancipation, such as cynical constructs of the managing diversity strategies and practices. However, multiple discourses compete in the experiences of the participants as they navigate experiences to discrimination. Conformist innovator (Legge, 1978) behaviours are evident here in that participants revert back to a place of supporting the interests of managers and how this can be prioritised over wider social and moral obligations to employees. The process is complicated by the status of the HR profession. In this respect a degree of challenge is made but a more powerless subject position is adopted by the use of the conformist innovator and prioritising the interests of the manager and an assumption that the decision is made on merit. The constrains on ethical and moral HR practices and behaviours were identified by Guest and Woodrow (2012) but these findings highlight how this is not a simple case of needing to support the business but how the participants become trapped in dominant discourses in relation to ways of doing.

These findings also provided greater complexity to the understanding of HR professionals, as gatekeepers for discrimination. Research has shown how HR managers can play a gatekeeping role in discriminatory behaviours by not being overtly discriminating but tolerating or influencing the behaviours (Harris and Ogbona, 2016). The process of gatekeeping was not straight forward, as the participants experiences complex multi-discursive experiences in the challenging and standing up to discriminatory behaviours. This was constructed, as being an important element of their professionalism and demonstrating their credibility. However, the empathy shown to the managers making biased recruitment decisions supports the impact of the individualistic discourse creating the conditions where structural inequalities can be understood, as individual problems or failings. Strategies for tolerating and resisting subtle and overt forms of discrimination position the participants, as powerful and powerless at different times, particularly through the use of social justice discourse.

9.4.1 The role of discourses on intra-gender violence and role model identification

Reflecting on the experiences above another discursive practice amongst the participants was the way in which individualistic and unitarist managing diversity discourses intertwined with doing femininities and masculinities to impact their relationships inside and outside of the HR profession. Given the high degree of feminisation within the profession, particularly up to the middle management level the participants often explored their experiences of working for a female manager and being part of a team heavily dominated by women, in both positive and negative career management terms. According to Mavin, Grandy and Williams (2014: 439) *'... relationships between women in organisations are complex, contradictory and under researched; they take place within gendered contexts and can constrain and undermine women's progress'*.

As such effective intra-gender relationship are significant in terms of career management because of their influence on networking and social capital gains. Addressing calls for more nuanced understandings that can reveal the complexity of women's relationships within the workplace (Carr and Kelan, 2016) the following discussion explores the ways in which the women draw on interwoven discourses, as they negotiate their working relationships with other women in the HR profession to create both privileged and disadvantaged positions.

Power relations frame the discourses of diversity in the HR profession. Previous research has revealed that power dynamics can often go unchallenged even if it is recognised that under-represented groups will continue to be disadvantaged and feel frustrations (Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). From the intersectional lens of Black Caribbean, New Affluent Worker it could be argued that participants sought to mobilise femininities in an affiliative but contested way, in order to create a distance between themselves and the depoliticization of discriminatory behaviours that she associates with people in the wider HR function.

The way in which the women use interwoven discourses to construct their relationships with the women they manage and the impact of being a manager on their careers, further highlights the complex ways in which doing femininities and masculinities operate within the HR profession and through the intersectional lens. The way discourses can work intertextually to position a speaker differently, shifting in speech (Baxter, 2003) was evident in the talk of the participants. The findings support the view that women's relationships at

work are complex and can be characterised by fast shifting positions of distance, affiliation and competition, and sometimes in combination (Carr and Kelan, 2016). Given the high degree of feminisation in the profession (female CIPD membership stands at over 80%) the participants are likely to have been managed by a women at one stage in their career and depending on the size of the HR function where they work, are likely to be working alongside them. Being managed by a women is associated with powerful, often negative stereotypes that are reinforced by television and film depictions of women in management positions. The stereotypical image is reminiscent of a dominant queen bee who displays masculinities through a single-minded careerist attitude, which means she puts herself first and the needs of the business before her employees (Warning and Buchanan, 2008).

The multiple discursive positioning of the participants reveals the complex way in which femininities are mobilised in working relations within the HR profession, as the use 'nice people' to refer people in HR creates connotations of respectable femininity and middle-class decorum that requires conforming and resisting challenges to the status quo (Mavin and Grandy, 2016). The way in which the routinisation of gendered practices can become ingrained in the talk of women and to construct women, as well as men (Pulllen and Knights, 2007) is evident in the way 'nice' also depicts the lower strategic influence or status in the profession. Doing gender (Butler, 2004) in this way constructs colleagues in HR, as being able to offer little support however, as explored above can be tolerated for maintaining social relations within the work place. Previous research highlights how women can mobilise different strategies of femininities to help negotiate dominate hegemonic masculinity (Carr and Kelan, 2016).

 The findings presented here challenge these assumptions and reveal a more complex picture of female managers managing other women. Despite the ambitions of the Ulrichisation of HR the transactional element of the middle manager role has never gone away (Francis and Keegan, 2006). The participants constructed these pressures and how having members of staff does not necessarily relieve the volume of work and instead this was often constructed, as another demand in an already pressurised environment inside and outside of work. The persuasiveness of the business first textscape (Kegan and Francis, 2010) in the HR profession permeates here. 'Managing' is then constructed, as a distraction that comes at the expense of undertaking other strategic and transactional activities. In seeking to understand how negative intra-gender relationships manifest (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014) it is evident the

pressure experienced in middle management roles and how different discourses can position the speaker, as powerful and powerless, impacts the subject position they adopt when negotiating their relationships.

The often-pressurised environment and wider gendered context in which the women are operating in creates the conditions for where acts of micro-violence in intra-gender relationships can emerge. Whilst the majority of the women discussed examples of micro-violence Black Caribbean and Black African women and white women from traditional working-class backgrounds were more likely to discuss acts of micro-violence and aggression from other women, usually their senior manager. These acts of micro-violence can be experienced in subtle or more overt ways and occur more often to marginalised groups in a sporadic way (ibid: 443). The intersectional lens reveals the way in which acts of micro-violence and aggression can lead to feelings of frustrations and confusion but also how they can be resisted through career driven discourses and self- determination to succeed, even in the face of negative treatment. But as demonstrated here acts of micro-violence by other women within the HR profession are experienced in affiliated and contested ways (Carr and Kelan, 2016).

In this respect the way in which expectations and justifications for senior women's behaviour in the HR profession were shifting in the context of interwoven discourses that could create conditions of empathy, as well as negative judgement. The combination of magnified ethical expectations and the gendered context of senior management, whereby women are expected to perform norms in accordance with being both feminine and masculine makes their position of potential role model problematic. Guest and Woodrow (2012) suggested it is unrealistic to assume that HR managers can live up to certain ethical standards due to their limited power but they did not consider the constraints and impact on the behaviour of female HR senior leaders afforded to them within the gendered context of organisations and the profession.

The women construct senior women, in the main, as detached or childless and this could impact the way in which they are viewed as role models. The lack of senior management role models is problematic, as it is often cited as a reason for the lack of women in leadership positions. The problem is cyclical because as women cannot find other women in management to identify with, less women enter into management (Singh, Vinnicombe,

James, 2006). In the context of the HR profession due to the high level of feminisation, despite being significantly disproportionally represented in senior management, women do occupy senior positions. In this respect a lack of identifiable roles models by the participants cannot solely be explained by a scarcity of female leaders. The focus then falls on the way in which the participants identified people in the profession and wider workplace, as a role model. Negative role-modelling behaviours have been shown to have a detrimental impact on female career progression choices (Cross, Linehan and Murphy, 2015). As shown here the gendered professional identification processes reveals how women engage in social-psychological admirations of other women so conduct more critical evaluations of the person that they seek to identify with (Kelan and Mah, 2014: 99).

It is evident from the findings that where a role model is named this is based on gender identification processes of admiration rather than idealisation (Kelan and Mar, 2014). Underpinning theories of role models is that individuals will try to see to select people that are like them and are identifiable to them in obvious ways such as gender or race (Quimby and DeSantis, 2006: 297). Being like them is not only significant in terms of looks but also value alignment, which could explain why admiration processes rather than idealisation processes are evident. For the first generational immigrant Black Caribbean and African and white women from traditional middle-class backgrounds people that they admired, rather than specific role models, were selected tended to be people that had formed part of their experiences in developing social and economic capital.

Previous research has revealed how women tend to select role models based on admiration, as they are looking for emotional support (Kelan and Mah, 2014 and Durbin and Tomlinson, 2014). This also reflects how perceptions of role models can shift throughout the female career span. The findings here do support other research which emphasizes a shift in thinking in career management away from the promotion of role models based on idealised principles, as this can be discouraging to women. The range of role models identified by the participants, in what could be considered normal jobs and no senior positions, also supports calls within professional publications for more honest representations of role models, which take into accounts factors of juggling family and tell more complex stories (Orgad, 2017)

These issues also connected to developing mentors within and outside of the HR profession. Social relationship development such as networking outside of the HR profession has been

indicated to the bring positive career benefits (Gubbins and 2016). Mentoring has been identified, as an important activity for women who have gone on to have successful careers. However, despite a wide range academic and practitioner interest in mentoring for female career development a precise understanding of how the relationship achieved these benefits has not been identified (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2014). The findings presented here contribute to these debates in that black African and Caribbean participants were more likely to engage in networking and mentoring opportunities but as per Buzzandl's et al intersectionality study of mentoring schemes for women in higher education there was cynicism amongst the participants in relation to the difference that it would ultimately make to their career profession.

9. 5 Addressing RO 4 - To explore the role of ethical and sustainable HR discourses on the career management experiences of female HR middle managers at the intersect of gender, ethnicity and class.

 The final discussion section considers the role in which ethical and sustainable HR discourses were used in complex and interdiscursive ways for career gains. Contemporary theories of career management emphasise the importance of personal values to career success and commitment (Briscoe and Hall, 2006). The discourse of helping people was constructed in terms of ethical and moral constructs in relation to activities within and outside of the organisations. These discursive patterns also aligned to the discourses of why they joined the HR profession and the values that they construct drive their careers. The majority of the participants constructed wanting to work in HR to help and develop people. There was a focus on employee wellbeing and supporting wider societal goals outside of the organisation and what could be aligned to Kramar (2014)'s approach to sustainable HRM. Ethical and moral discourses, in common with the sustainable models of HRM (Kramar, 2014) are used to construct wanting to be involved in more HRM practices that take into account wider stakeholders and this is a considerable source of motivation for their careers. This supports previous research that suggest career callings are usually located in altruistic goals and wanting to help other people (Hall, 1996).

However, these discourses where drawn upon to construct the times when the participants were most committed and enjoying work but experience discursive gender struggle in constructing these behaviours as 'too nice'. The separation of the employee advocate from

the HR role via the implementation of the Ulrich model has reduced the discursive space for championing employees (Francis and Keegan, 2010) or as expressed by the participants, as being 'nice'. There has also been a separation of the strategic and the transactional aspect of the HR role. The discursive practice supports previous research, which questions the desirability or possibility of separating strategic from transactional work and whether this ever actually possible or desirable because all management activity actually involves elements of doing both (Caldwell, 2004). Also, at play here is the way in which activities become framed as feminine and masculine, such as helping people and being nice (feminine) is constructed as non- strategic (masculine). The discussions reveal the desirability of recasting feminine activities in different and more positive ways rather than an assumption that they are non-strategic (Holma and Schnurr, 2006: 31). In doing so the discussions provide alternative discourses of 'being strategic' and questions the taken for granted assumptions that this must mean a commercial and non-people focus.

9.6 Contribution to knowledge

Having consider how the research objectives have been addressed the following discussions bring together the main findings of the research and summarises and demonstrates the contribution to existing bodies of knowledge;

9. 6. 1 Careers in the HR profession

The findings of this research contribute to what can be considered the relatively small body of academic literature that has examined the careers of HR managers and women in the HR profession (Legge, 1987, Gooch, 1994; Thompson, 2004; Ackah and Heaton, 2003 & 2006; Brandl et al, 2008; Pichler et al, 2008 Reichel et al, 2010). Arguably surprisingly small due to the focus for continuing professional development and career management, which is integral to the professional ethos of HR. Feminist poststructuralism and the intersectional lens applied here allowed for new insights into the career management experiences of the women from shifting and complex subject positions. Previous research has treated women, as a homogenous whole when exploring the career experiences and outcomes of female HR professionals. In doing so, marginalised voices were foregrounded in the context of how dominant professional discourses impacted their career management experiences in competing and affiliated ways, providing the opportunity for new reflections on the impact of discourses in profession. The study of female careers through an intersectional lens is timely

given the increasing feminisation of the HR profession, the latest statistics reveal the profession in the UK is becoming more feminised and more women are actively choosing to come into HR rather than falling into the profession (Personnel Today, 2017).

Historically, research in the profession has been interested in the impact of increased feminisation and the status of women in the profession (Legge, 1987, Brandl et al, 2008 and Reichel et al, 2010). With the exception of Legge (1987) this research has tended to be quantitatively based and reveals the macro conditions and socio-institutional support that can act, as an enabler for the integration of women into more strategic roles within the profession. The findings presented here, at a time of increasing feminization reveal the way in which HR professionals are still reconciling with inherent and gendered tensions in the profession, concerning developing credibility with the line (Guest and King, 2004 and Legge, 1995) and tensions in relation to the way in which HR work can viewed, as strategic or not (Caldwell, 2004). The poststructuralist lens reveals the way in which gender intertwines in these debates, as the women discursively wrestle with trying to foreground social and ethical discourses to emphasize the needs of employees in strategic and diversity management outcomes. Guest and Woodrow (2011) suggested that HR managers alone cannot be relied on to embed ethical ways of working in organizations. This study reveals that attempts to do so are shaped by complex gendering process intertwined with the way in which ethical and social justice discourses are silenced by the dominant mainstream discourse of strategic HRM.

The experiences of the women suggest, at this time of increased feminization, that the inherent tensions (Legge, 1978) within the profession are under strain from a renewed discursive emphasis on ethical HRM and social justice positions. From the intersectional localities of Black Caribbean and African, first generational immigrants to the UK they are able to mobilize career resources of self- drive and a social justice approach where they can mentor other women and seek to speak out at unfair treatment that they witness. However, these discursive positions are in tensions with the mainstream dominant strategic HRM textscape, which creates conditions of job vulnerabilities and also invisible work at home for the women.

9. 6. 2 The HR generalist discourse impacting HR careers

A key contribution relating to the existing literature on careers in the HR profession is the HR generalist discourse, which has been revealed as significant in the career outcomes in the HR profession (Cooke, 2006 and Tamkin et al, 2006). HR generalist discourse and practice has attracted attention due to the perception that this type of experience is required for career success but is increasingly problematic to gain due to the Ulrichisation of HR jobs and HR structures (Tamkin et al, 2006). The poststructuralist feminist lens applied here exposed the inherent tensions and ambiguities in this term that is commonly associated with HR career success. The analysis of the participants discursive practice revealed their shifting subject positions and surprising and contradictory positions on the importance of generalist experience. To illustrate, there was a contradictory position shared by the majority of the women of needing generalist experience, whilst at the same time portraying men, as being able to parachute into more senior roles. In relation to this point participants could shift in one sentence for stressing the importance of generalist experience to a position of where they were taking on extra responsibility but not seeing a significant change in their career circumstances.

Tension in the term generalist is further created, as through the intersectional lens, women start to experience being put upon and taken for granted with excessive demands on their time both at work and at home. It emerged from the discussions that some of the women would be doing 'invisible work' at home, in the context of aspects of their paid work they could not complete in their working hours but could not admit. Thus, tied up in the generalist discourse was the importance of being able to show they could 'cope'. The intersectional lens revealed that this was experienced more sharply for the women with less socio-economic capital and social capital, which provided the confidence to be more self-directive in their careers. Revealing the every-day discursive struggles of women is an important goal of poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis (Baxter, 2003). This analysis of how the women, through the intersectional lens construct their subject positions around discourses of 'being a generalist' and 'available to the business' provides insights into marginalised voices in the HR profession. In doing so the findings also contribute to the calls from Baruch and Vardi (2016) for research that can focus and expose the less positive aspects of careers and career management, particularly aspects that lead to job insecurity and unfair treatment.

9.6. 3 Training and development opportunities with the HR profession

In a similar way to the ambiguities and tensions that are revealed in the nature of the HR generalist discourse the discursive experiences of the women, in relation to training and development, an essential career management activity, also reveals insights into the inherent power tensions within the profession. The participants often constructed that there was no time to conduct training or other development activities in the HR profession revealing the discursive practice of putting the needs of the HR function below the needs of the business. The discursive construction of the HR function, as 'in service' to the business is one of the inherent tensions within the profession (Legge, 1978 and Guest and King 2004). The Ulrichisation of the profession sought to make HR a genuine partner to the business but the inherent power tensions remain, which can keep the function located in a lower position. This is a complex discursive process, whereby the power of the commerciality discourse is also used to justify under investment in training for the HR function.

The participants also experienced othering from dominant elite groups in terms of who was perceived, as talented and worth investing in the HR profession. The multi-discursive practices of Aida are revealing, as she discursively wrestled with why she had been ignored and denied training, which includes avoiding naming discrimination. Kelan (2014) described this as the 'unspeakability of inequality' and called for silences to be exposed in intersectionality studies in other contexts. The use of silences was one discursive practice to tolerate discrimination or career barriers. Wyatt and Silvester (2015) in using the labyrinth analogy for Black and Ethnic Minority leaderships career paths called for more research that examines not only the barriers that BME employees experience but also how they strive to overcome them (Wyatt and Silvester, 2015). The intersectional lens applied in this research provides alternative discursive space for Black Caribbean and African women whose voices have been marginalized in the profession. For some of these participants set-backs in their careers can be discursively constructed away and turned into greater self- drive to succeed. As per Sang, Al-Dajani and Ozbilgin (2013) first generational immigrants to the UK in particular, could draw on and mobilise self-drive career behaviours, which see them develop their career in accordance with their goals. However, as the 'sometimes privileged' (Atewologun and Sealy, 2014) thesis reveals their experiences are characterised by twists and turns, which can shift in discursive sentences, in relation to position of strength and vulnerability. The findings also provide some qualitative context to the survey data that revealed a significant percentage of CIPD members felt they did not have access to the training opportunities that they needed (CIPD, 2018c). In acknowledging the small-scale and

contextual nature of this feminist poststructuralist study, which is not seeking to be generalisable in any way to all women in the profession, the findings open up alternative discursive space from the perspective of marginalised voices in the professions for the how opportunities for training and development are experienced.

9.6. 4 Intra-gender violence and the Queen Bee syndrome

The above discussions also expose another contribution of the research to call for more research exploring intra-gender violence and the queen bee syndrome. In relation to these discussions access to training and development opportunities were often experienced through discursive interactions with other women in the profession. Carr and Kelan (2016) highlighted how perceptions of women senior leaders as 'queen bees' and a focus in media portrayals of women's negative relationships with other women within the workplace, masked the full extent of the realities of women's working relationships, particularly in the context of female career development and opportunities. Given the significant feminisation in the HR profession the nature of female working relationships within the profession are significant but under-researched. This research contributes to the debates that seek to understand the complexity, tensions and ambiguities in the nature of female relationships within the HR profession and how they impact career management opportunities.

Exploring the discursive construction of the participants interactions and experiences of senior female HR managers and employees within the profession, reveals the way in which from intersectional subjectivities the speakers fluctuate between positions of powerfulness and powerless. Where participants had experienced othering on account of being from a traditional working-class background or first generational immigrant to the country, their discursive practice shifted between wanting to be a positive role model to other women, to experiencing disappointment when the pressure of managing in the middle meant that they couldn't give, as much time to their teams as they would like. Negative intra-gender relations are argued to be impacted by acts of micro-aggression, such as disassociation and suppression of opportunity (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014). The interdiscursive practices of the women through the intersectional lens reveal the range of competing discourses that construct their intra-gender relations positively and negatively or in affiliated or contested ways. Disassociating behaviours of senior managers were constructed in counterintuitive ways from positions that could have been assumed to be marginalised, as

disassociation provided the opportunity for career mobilisation through expanding generalist experience. Rebecca's experience of being compared to a middle-class colleague by her female manager created experiences of disfranchisement and withdrawal from the organisation and the perceptions of the inescapability of politics, which shaped her future career goals.

9. 6. 5 Role model identification

The proceeding discussions highlight what is evident in the discursive practice of the women, as they explored interactions and perception of the other women in the profession, was the dominance of the masculine symbolic order. These findings also contribute to the growing body of literature that is seeking to understand how women choose and use role models for career management gains. Discursive practices in relation to the ideal worker, respectable business femininity and active mothering were present in how other women were constructed in the profession, particularly in more senior roles. Providing support for Mah and Kelan's (2014) thesis that women use processes of admiration rather than idealisation when looking at other women, as potential role models. The possibilities of the latter in the HR function from the perspective of the participants was complicated by the interdiscursive processes surrounding the ideal worker and active mothering discourse and the discourse that senior roles are not compatible with being a mother. These findings support previous research that idealised images of successful business women who have 'made it' will only have limited impact on role model identification and these should be replaced with accounts of women from a diversity of experiences and seniority to expand representation and expectations on female role model behaviours within dominant masculine cultures (Orgad, 2017).

9. 6. 6 Dominant commerciality discourse in the HR profession Business/commercial interest textscape

This research contributes to the growing body of research that is exploring the role of discourses in HRM practices and experiences of working within the HR profession (Mahaddevan and Kilian-Yasin (2016). The way discourses play a central role in the establishment of professional cultures and reflect dominant power structures in society receives growing attention in management and organisational studies (Gold and Bratton,

2003) and this research contributes to debates within the HR professional of the role and significance of commerciality discourses. The development of the mainstream HR textscape which prioritises commercial interests over employee needs (Keegan and Francis, 2010) was evident in the findings of this research. There was also evidence of neoliberalist discourses which emerged alongside the establishment of strategic HRM. The participants extensively used individualistic and commercially credible discourses to justify negative treatment of employees and their own career management experiences. This had significant implications for this career management experiences such as discursive commitment to invest in their own training, which provides an explanation for previous research that suggests that members of the HR profession under invests in their own training and development in the profession (CIPD, 2018).

Exploring discourses through a feminist poststructuralist lens means that this research does not aim to simply replace grand narratives or regimes of truth with other dominant discourses, as this would be another will to power and is under desirable in poststructuralist thought (Foucult, 1980: 109- 33). Instead the main contribution to the body of discourse analysis literature in the HRM profession is to provide evidence of discursive resistance to the dominant commerciality discourses so that these are challenged and gradually replaced. The emergence of alternative discourses that expose the tensions in the dominant discourse and foregrounding of these helps to questions and challenge the discursive space and norms and behaviours that are acceptable within its realm (Baxter, 2007).

One way in which this occurred in the discursive practices of the women was how the dominant discourse of 'being strategic' catches them in a trap of expecting more strategic work when in reality all management activities are characterised 'by doing' *and* being strategic (Caldwell, 2004). Tensions in social relations with line managers, in the context of what work can be done strategically and what work cannot, was thus created. Identified by Legge (1978), as one of the inherent tensions in the profession this was still evident in the careers management experiences of the participants. Whilst there is obviously a desire to be doing more strategic work, particularly given the fact that all of the participants had Postgraduate qualifications, it is the way in which being strategic positions the nature of HR work into binaries. This can lead to disfranchisement from current role and ambiguity in relation to the type of work that should be strategically prioritised.

The focus on commercial aspects of HR delivery also created ambiguities for the HR practitioners, as they valued ethical and employee centred approaches but were discursively restricted in given this predominance. The findings question the assumption that HR professionals have given up on resistance in the face of the dominant business case and are willing adopters of the conformist innovator role and thus consigning the HR profession to a state of dependence to the business (Guest and King, 2004 and Guest and Woodrow, 2011). The experiences of the women through the intersectional lens reveal a more complex process and sites of resistance and conformity can be identified. This alternative discursive position of revaluating which activities are viewed as 'strategic' and how strategic and transactional activities are valued in the profession provides new discursive space from which to develop alternative behaviours within the profession.

9. 6. 7 Dominant managing diversity discourses

This research also contributes to our understanding of the role and use of dominant diversity discourses in the HR profession and particularly in the relation to career management outcomes and experiences. The findings here contribute to other poststructuralist studies that have exposed how the empowering rhetoric of diversity management based on business case principles does not translate into practice (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). The discursive practices of the participants negotiating their subject position in the face of discriminatory behaviours reveals the tensions and ambiguities in the business case approach and how it is inscribed with social justice case discourses. Ethnicity was named alone or in combination with gender, as a potential barrier in the career experiences of the Black Caribbean and African participants with varying degrees of resistance and tolerance in the context of intersectional subjectivities. The following sections explore the conditions through the intersectional lens that can allow for the tolerance of the discriminatory treatment in relation to the career management outcomes in the HR profession.

9. 6. 8 Gatekeepers of discriminatory behaviours

The ambiguities and tensions in discursive practices of the participants in experiencing discrimination on the grounds of race, demonstrate what they perceive to be both overt and covert racism, which often occur together in today's organisations (Harris and Ogbona, 2016). Others have described new types of racism in organisations, as subtle and hard to

detect (Van Laer and Janssens, 2011). This has an unsettling impact on individuals experiencing it and whilst it can be delivered in a sustained way, experiences can also be sporadic creating tensions and uncertainty, as evidenced here in relation to the participants attempts to understand and justify the ways in which they were being treated. The discursive practices of the participants were also shaped by the way in which they saw discrimination happening to other people, as well as themselves through their roles, as an HR manager. Harris and Ogbona (2016) called for more research seeking to understand the way in which gatekeeping for discriminatory behaviours can occur in organisations. HR managers have been identified, as undertaking gatekeeping roles by tacitly disregarding organisational policy that is designed to stop discrimination.

 The discursive practices of the participants reveal more complex practices in relation to what could be described, as gatekeeping. The participants experienced shifting discursive positions towards managers who demonstrated discriminatory behaviours. In most instances this was constructed, as challenging these behaviours in the first instance on moral, ethical and professional grounds. These discourses were in competition with dominant mainstream HRM and the business case diversity discourse, which emphasised decisions, even discriminatory in nature, where in the hands of the business. Reaffirming Knights and Omanvic (2016) position that diversity management based on business case principles can only go so far in addressing unequal treatments when it can always be explained in business interest terms.

 The intersectional lens also provides further insights into gatekeeping behaviours from 'sometimes privileged' positions. Atewologun and Sealy (2014) reveal how managerial positions put ethnic minorities in positions of what they describe, as sometimes privileged. Exploring day-to-day interactions can reveal even in positions of more hierarchical power they can experience both privilege and disadvantage. First generational immigrants drew on social justice diversity discourses to challenge the behaviours of managers from the perspective of experiences they had from trying to establish their professional working lives. However, potential economic vulnerability meant that this became intertwined with the business case discourse of manager prerogatives, as having the last say. In accordance with the findings of Sang, Al-Dajani and Ozbilgin (2013) they mobilised unique career resources from their experiences of coming to the UK, which could at times give them degrees of powerfulness in their social interactions with others. However, there was an almost in-

escapable trap of the business case discourse that was applied on the grounds of merit and unitarist goals.

There were also individualistic elements at play, as the costs of speaking out on a wider scale were seen to impact the nature of social relations, which could be damaging to their future careers. Gubbins and Garavan (2015) identified that the dual employee and manager facing role that HR managers occupy can create a site of tension for building social capital within organisations. The combination of these factors created the conditions for what could be described, as more subtle or constrained forms of gatekeeping. It also supports previous research that suggests that resistance against discrimination in organisations is likely to be at the micro- emancipation level rather than wider structural change (Zanoni and Janssen, 2007).

9.6. 9 Unspeakability of inequality

These findings also address calls for more research exploring the unspeakabilty of inequality. Kelan (2014) identified this term in an intersectional study of young professionals in two professional services firms. In Kelan's study discrimination was constructed, as a thing of the past or happening at client locations. The participants in this study constructed discrimination, as taking place away from themselves 'personally' and constructed it, as happening to other people in the organisations or outside the organisation. However, often after an initial denial of it happening to them participants would go on to provide an example of where could be constructed to have occurred. Other participants constructed discrimination, as taking place more commonly in other sectors, which could influence decisions to stay in roles for fear of moving, even if this meant tolerating discriminatory practices in their current organisation. This highlights the complexities in how individuals construct experiences of discrimination and negative treatment particularly in the context of what can be more subtle, and hard to detect types of racism in organisations today (Van Laer and Janssens, 2011). A previous poststructuralist study that explored the use of managing diversity discourses amongst HR managers revealed the highly selective and instrumental way in which the discourses are selected to recreate the status quo and power imbalance within organisations and do not deploy them to challenge managerial practices (Zanoni and Janssens (2004). The experiences of the participants through the intersectional lens reveals

challenges were made through the social justice perspective to individual managerial practices but fundamental challenges to the existing power relations remained absent.

The complex discursive practices reveal how social justice discourses can be silenced in the HR profession via the dominant mainstream business and managing diversity discourses to the detriment of positive career outcomes for women. The findings of this study reveal the importance of foregrounding the voice of the women in the profession through the intersectional lens, as it reveals sites of alternative resistance to dominant hegemonic views. As the final analysis chapter explored the participants sought to construct social justice approaches in a way that moved them from being 'nice to haves' or 'being nice', which trapped the women into gendered ways of doing and undoing gender. The way in which feminine behaviours of 'caring for others' has been constructed as non- strategic is common in organisational practice (Holma and Schnurr, 2006: 31). This undermined the efforts of the participants to discursively construct the social justice case, as effective resistance to the dominant business case approach.

A key aim of feminist poststructuralism is to give space to marginalised female voices (Baxter, 2003). It has been argued in this thesis that the discursive experiences of the women in the HR function, particularly through an intersectional lens have been overlooked and often silenced voices. A greater foregrounding of a range of voices in the HR profession is advocated concerning the way in which diversity management is discursively constructed and resisted in the HR professions beyond just the narrow axis of the business case. The poststructuralist and intersectional lens help to expose the complex ways in which subtle and overt and covert forms of discrimination are able to be exist and be reproduced in the profession. Whilst this is a potentially uncomfortable discussion for the HR profession, as per the 'darkside perspective' for career management there needs to more honest dialogue relating to the barriers and enablers to career management within the profession and less positivistic assumptions concerning an 'open playing field' for careers success, which does not account for inherent structural inequalities.

9. 6. 10 Models of 'new' career management

The aim of this research was never to propose a new model of career management or select one most appropriate to women in the HR profession but rather by applying the

poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis there is the possibility to contest the authority of established theoretical models and approaches by providing space for sites of discursive resistance (Baxter, 2008: 243). The following discussions of the contribution of the research to the body of knowledge on new career management models reflects this position and consideration is also paid to how discourses associated with 'new' career management have entered the discursive practices of the women and compete and inflect with other dominant professional discourses.

9.6. 11 Protean model –values and boundary free?

The findings of this research contribute to the body of literature calling for less positivistic portrayals of the career management models and experiences (McCabe, 2009 and Baruch and Vardi (2016). The following discussions explore how the discourses of protean and boundaryless careers have infused professionals talks and do resonate discursively in relation to their experiences. However, the intersectional lens allows for these understandings of application to be considered in more nuanced ways and account for both privilege and disadvantage from an emphasis on self-management career models.

The most established of the 'new' models of career management has been the boundaryless and protean career models. The boundaryless career represents increased job mobility between project-based roles and organisational hierarchies, inside and outside of single organisations. This is said be accompanied with a protean attitude towards career management that reflects self-direction, drive and freedoms to shape career decisions on personal values (Briscoe and hall (2006). Self-drive and confidence careerist behaviours of Black Caribbean and African women from traditional working-class backgrounds were. Careerist or self-driven behaviours that were instilled in them from childhood often formed part of the discursive practices to resist or overcome the barrier of discriminatory behaviours, highlighting the how intersectionality can create subject positions that are simultaneously privileged and disadvantaged (Atewologun and Sealy, 2014). The role of confidence has been cited, as in important barrier *and* enabler to female mangers success (Simpson et al, 2004 and Sandberg, 2013). How confidence and self-drive is interpreted reflects inherent power relations of gender, ethnicity and class conditions within organisation and access to managerial roles (Broadbridge, 2015). From their sometimes-privileged position of having reached middle management the Black Caribbean and African participants experienced

barriers despite presenting in a professionally confident and self-assured way. Often the barriers were discursively constructed in a way to silence the 'unspeakability of inequality' (Kelan, 2014) and framing their experiences around merit based discourses. The discursive struggle experienced when being told they were 'too professional' or self-driven exposes the limits of career management models based on choice and freedom that do not account for inherent structural inequalities that work to maintain the interests of dominant groups in the labour market. Through the intersectional lens these findings reveal counterintuitive sites of career privilege, which supports previous research that marginalised groups can mobilise career resource for positions of career privilege. To illustrate, first generational migrants mobilised career resources from non-professional work experience and discursively constructed these, as a career enabler.

The findings also call into question the absence of the consideration of socio-economic and historical power dynamics in protean and boundaryless career management models, which are exposed by the discursive experiences of the women. They revealed the impact of managing in the middle and needing to maintain a persona of the ideal worker and 'coping' at work, whilst also juggling family commitments. The participants described the impact of needing to conduct 'invisible' work at home, which represented aspects of their paid role that could need be fitted into their normal hours. Hatton (2017) calls for a broader conceptualisation of female invisible work that needs to be kept hidden from others and the context in which it occurs. Given the latest CIPD (2018c) survey of careers in the HR profession revealed the high percentage of people working when on leave and experiencing their work load, as impacting on their mental health, these discursive practices of needing to comply with the ideal worker provides insights into how these discursive conditions can materialise. These experiences also curtail the extent to which the women the can engage with active career planning, as required by the 'new models' of career management, as this is constructed, as time consuming and career development activities tend to be focused on the organisation.

The extent to which the women could also conceive of boundary spanning in terms of hierarchical progression and into other organisations was impacted by the discursive construction of discrimination happening elsewhere, which has been a feature of other intersectional studies of professional women's careers (Kelan, 2014). This also reveals the contradictions and shifting positions of the women and highlights how tolerating

discriminatory behaviours and the discursive capacity to boundary span internal and external organisational hierarchies are complex discursive processes. In doing so, further credence is given to encouraging research that looks at both the positive and negative (darkside) outcomes and possibilities of 'new' models of career management, which account for the boundaries' in career choices that are created by historical, cultural and social conditions.

9. 6. 12 Female career management models

Findings make a number of contributions to current career management models designed to represent females careers more effectively, the following explores the contribution to the kaleidoscope and frayed model of careers.

Kaleidoscope model – whose opting in and out?

 The terminology most closely associated with Mainiero and Suvillan's (2005 and 2006) kaleidoscope model is the opt-out revolution and authenticity in career decision choices. The opt-out revolution refers to the argument there has been a generational shift, which has seen large numbers of women choose not to aspire to the most senior positions in organisations. Career choices are shaped by family, authenticity and the degree of challenge. These factors change, readjust and reformulate, as you would see on the shifting images of the kaleidoscope. The discursive experiences of participants reveal in a similar way the complex construction of career choices but missing from kaleidoscope model is the way in which the choice discourse is also inscribed with hegemonic discourses of the ideal worker, respectable business femininity and intensive parenting, which can curtail or contain choices.

 The opting-out discourse was not available to all participants in their discursive practice of exploring their career choices balanced around family and work. The intersectional lens reveals how for a number of the Black African and Caribbean participants from traditional working class and new affluent worker social categories, opting out did not form an extensive part of their discursive construction. Discourses of self-drive and family motivation meant that full-time work had been part of their career even when the children were young. These discourses were also inscribed with socio-economic imperatives at the time, making opting-out an even less viable discursive option.

Opting- out was discursively constructed more commonly amongst traditional middle-class women, where the imperative to opt-out built around the importance of active parenting and the ideal worker. Understanding the discursive construction of career choice within the broader masculine culture (Broadbridge, 2015) and respectable business femininity discourse (Mavin and Grandy, 2014) in organisations and professional life has already been explored in this chapter. The interconnectedness of the discourses was also evident in the middle class constructions of choices relating to opting- out. Through the experiences of the participants 'choices' can then be understood, as complex and bounded within a range of interconnected discourses, beyond just family and a need for being authentic. These discourses also shaped the way in which senior roles were discursively constructed, as being non-compatible with family life.

Frayed model of careers

The contemporary models of career management that emphasize 'choice' in simple terms have been explored here as problematic in the face of complex discursive practices of the women. Sabelis and Schilling's (2013) frayed model for career management has greater resonance with the discursive practices of the participants through the intersectional lens. The model is based around the rhythm of employment and work that is shaped by the historical, cultural and social boundaries of careers (La Pointe, 2013). The emphasis is not so much of specific choices at key life stages in relation to opting-in and out but rather reflects the richness of life unfolding in different directions and different ways contingent on personal and external conditions. The model is also applicable to male and female careers so creates less binary comparison (Sabelis and Schilling, 2013). The model shares similar metaphors to Wyatt and Silvester (2015) use of the labyrinth to explore the realities of ethnic minority careers, which has applicability to the discursive positioning the Black African and Caribbean women in this research, as they experienced twists and turns in their career journey and built positions of strength and career resource mobility from what could be considered marginalised positions. Supporting the research of La Pointe (2013) who proports there is a greater need to avoid idealizing grand theories of career change capacity, such as declaring opt-out revolutions and instead the focus should be on sources of gendered, in combination with other social categories, practices that create the conditions that shape career journeys for women.

9.7 Chapter Summary

 The findings of the research have addressed the research question and research objectives by demonstrating the complex and multiple discursive positioning that takes places in the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession. In common with other intersectional research the findings reveal how multiple memberships of social categories, that have traditionally been marginalized, does not equate to multiplicity of disadvantage. Instead the key finding from the research is to provide alternative discourses that challenge dominant professional and career management discourses that can curtail the career opportunities of female middle managers in the HR profession. The intersectional localities of discursive struggles that are highlighted in the findings of the research provide new insights and alternative positions to current discursive practices that help to stabilised dominant commerciality and managing diversity discourses in the profession, which can negatively impact female career progression. The findings also create space for ethical and sustainable HR professional discourses to emerge and provide change in relation to managing the wider organisation but also the careers of women in the HR profession in non-homogenous and fixed ways.

CHAPTER 10 Conclusion

10. 1 Overview

The main findings of the research have been to highlight the multiple discursive practices of female HR middle managers through an intercategorical intersectional lens that challenge the dominance of commercial and business case discourses in the HR profession. In doing so new textscapes are opened up for more ethical and sustainable approaches to both HRM and the careers of HR middles managers. This chapter will consider the theoretical, practical and policy implications of these findings. This chapter will also explore the limitations of the research in the context of its intersectional and feminist poststructuralist philosophical grounding. Ideas for further research emerging from the findings and analysis will also be explored and a final reflexivity note exploring the role and impact of the researcher brings this thesis to a close.

10.2 Theoretical implications

Feminist poststructuralism and intercategorical intersectionality where the two main underpinning theories to the research. The main theoretical implications for these two guiding paradigms will be considered here;

10.2.1 Feminist poststructuralism

One of the main contributions of feminist poststructuralism has been the concept of doing and undoing of gender, to challenge the natural gender order; '*gender is the mechanisms by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized*' (Butler, 2004: 42). Understanding the role of masculinities and femininities in organisational life and how through discourses they sustain dominant elite power becomes important, particularly in feminised professions, where our understanding of how masculinities and femininities are performed by both men and women and through the intersectional lens still needs exploring (McDonald, 2013). Feminised professions where women are not the numerical 'other' provide sites for greater representations of the fluidity in masculinities and femininities, which supports the breaking down of binary understandings. Despite feminist

poststructuralists emphasis on exposing greater fluidity in how the categories of male and female can be understood, in organisational and workplace day-to-day practice, breaking down binary and stereotypical categorisations of men and women and their associated behaviours remains challenging and, as such still deserves attention (Pullen and Knights, 2007). This research contributes to the body of feminist poststructuralist research that seeks to expose the ways in which gender is not fixed and natural and can impact the careers experiences of women.

This research contributes to an understanding of how gender becomes produced and preproduced, not just passively, through social interactions and discursive practices (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). The complex gendering processes that took place in relation to ethical and social justice perspectives, which were constructed, as being more in alignment with their values and why they joined the profession, were discursively diminished as being 'too nice', and as such 'non-strategic'. The negative gendering processes that associates caring and responsibilities for people, as feminine and therefore lacking in business credibility, creates an inherent tension in the talk of the women in the HR profession, where 'strategic business alignment' is the dominant textscape. Exposing these tensions and the negative connotations associated with stereotypical presentations of being feminine and masculine in the workplace helps challenge their production and reproduction. This research also contributes for calls to reset femininity in different and contextually specific, more positive ways. This creates the possibilities for reclaiming the use of femininities for women *and* men (Holmes and Schnurr, 2006: 33). The emphasis on the multiplicities of femininities implies the same possibility for masculinities, which helps destabilise essential gender binaries but changing the way hegemonic masculine power is viewed, as coherent and unified and embraces no otherness (Collinson and Hearn, 1994).

This research further contributes to feminist poststructuralists attempts to expose the multiplicity of femininities and masculinities by the inclusion of the intersectional lens, which reinforces the importance of understanding the way in which the doing of masculinities and femininities are shaped within different historical and cultural contexts (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). Exploring doing gender through the intersectional lens of gender, ethnicity and class provided new insights into shifting subject positions that can be contradictory and ambivalent to dominant gender discourse. As in the case of this research exploring the career management experiences of middle managers in the HR profession

reveals marginalised voices and the ways gender is negotiated and performed within specific contexts, which is another key aim of poststructuralist feminism (Baxter, 2003).

 The self-driven careerist attitudes of the women from Black Caribbean and African traditional working-class and new affluent worker categories, who did not foreground opting-out in the discursive practices of working-full time, challenges the masculine connotations of being a careerist and femininities based on intensive mothering. Here, their discursive practices of self-driven and confidence are grounded in their experiences of growing up with strong social support and a need to make the most of educational opportunities. The focus on the multiplicity of experiences of gender and in particular femininities, that recognise the dynamic and diverse ways in which people construct different kinds of femininity, helps to destabilise their essentialism (Baxter, 2008). Exposing the expectations on Black Caribbean and African and white, traditional working-class women of physical presentation and how 'being professional' was confined around a middle-class, white norm also exposed the boundaries of acceptable femininity in a given context and thus destabilises it.

 Focusing on the multiplicity of experiences of gender and in particular femininities that recognise the dynamic and diverse ways in which people construct different kinds of femininity and masculinity, helps to challenge how stereotypical forms are derived at and maintained (Baxter, 2003). This research has sought to provide more fluid and intersectional ways of exploring the multiple femininities to support the expansions of how forms of acceptable femininity are judged (Holmes and Schnurr, 2006). This work is on-going due to the default in organisations to still conform to stable categorisations of gender (Baxter, 2017). As was emergent in the discursive practices of the women in this study even where forms of stereotypical femininities and masculinities were challenged, competing discourses always positioned the women in powerful, powerless or a combination of both positions due to the continuation of the reactionary effects to greater gender, ethnicity and class structural reform (Baxter, 2003).

10. 2. 2 Intersectionality

 The intersectional lens has been underutilised in the professions (Hearn et al, 2016) and in career management research (Ryan, 2012). The importance of the professions, as an avenue of advancement for marginalised groups in society cannot be underestimated. Seeking to explore the professional and career experiences through the intersectional lens supports the

exploration of the potential benefits of intersectional research and its emancipatory potential in the context of organisations and the professions (McBride et al., 2015: 1). An intersectional perspective can expose the way in which gender in organizations has been examined in isolation from the role of whiteness, and its normalized status has been overlooked (Holvino, 2010). As this research provided a common platform for both dominant and non-dominant groups, which allowed for 'whiteness' to emerge, as an often unnamed source of privilege in organisations. By exploring the experiences of ethnic minority women in middle management positions the 'sometimes-privileged' thesis is further examined and binary assumptions of privilege can be challenged, as privilege is assumed to be in the hands of male, white-middle class sites often localities of other privilege are over looked (Atewologun and Sealy, 2014).

Sources of career management privilege through the intersectional lens exposed here, included the first generational immigrant participants mobilising career resources from the non-professional roles that they undertook when they first arrived in the UK. They also constructed, what could be considered from an initial place of marginalisation, the limitation of their language, as a source of privilege by appearing calm and considered within the workplace. The self-drive and confidence also derived from a combination of socio-economic conditions and social capital support was also constructed, as a significant source of privilege in their career management experiences for Black Caribbean and African women. In contrast to this the unnamed white, middle class privileges that were achieved through taken for granted social capital gains and networking were also evident.

Exposing privilege does not negate how often the women were simultaneously privileged *and* disadvantaged. The wider personal impact on the individuals in terms of wellbeing and invisible work was also an emergent theme of their discursive practices and the vulnerability of socio-economic conditions played a significant role in this. The inclusion of dominant and non-dominant groups reveals how societal and organisational privileges play out and impact groups differently. In seeking to understand how equality and inequality is maintained, understanding the role of privilege and power is important. Too often focusing on disadvantage ignores or makes invisible where privilege is retained (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). The significance of the intercategorical intersectional lens is relevant here, even within the wider feminist poststructuralist grounding of the research, as social categorisations of gender, ethnicity and class still reflect inherent biases in terms of privileged and

disadvantaged status. These lenses rather than creating entirely fluid categories have been able to deconstruct and expose the commonly held stereotypical views of gender, ethnicity and class impacting the career management experiences of the participants.

10.3 Practical implications

One of the criticism that has been labelled against feminist poststructuralism and intersectionality, is the problem of how findings based on these methodologies translate into practice. As explored in this thesis poststructuralism has been able to demonstrate the way in which social categorisations are socially constructed and can be understood in more fluid and contested ways. However, changing people's fixed assumptions of the categories of gender, ethnicity and class are difficult to change in practice (Pullen and Knights, 2007 and Baxter, 2017). Intersectionality has also been notoriously difficult to put into practice, via changes to organisational and governmental policy. Shifting perceptions of social categories beyond fixed and often binary understandings demonstrates the power of the hegemonic discourses that sustain existing power relations in favour of dominant elite groups.

As such, despite the challenges it is important to reflect and consider meaningful ways in which feminist poststructuralism and intersectionality can be put into practice. This needs to be considered from the poststructuralist position that there is not a will to power to replace existing theoretical models with another dominant model (Baxter, 2008: 243) but rather how in contesting established perspectives this can inform new thinking in relation to mainstream HRM and career management. The imperative to 'put intersectionality into practice' (Verloo et al., 2012) needs to be balanced in this wider perspective also. There are calls for concrete intersectional inventions that can disrupt unequal power structures (Davis, 2008) but the following discussions explore nuanced changes in the language and discourses that have been contested through this analysis. Woodhams and Lupton (2014: 306) argue that it is through language and culture in management that normative, stereotypical processes become to be used and understood, therefore can be site for change and resistance. Therefore, exploring the way in which discourses can be challenged and contested in practice provides a way of moving debates about intersectionality beyond ontological and epistemological concerns (Rodriguez et al, 2016).

The emphasis in the contribution to practice are on the counter hegemonic discourses and perspective of the participants that emerged in the process of the interviews. Feminist

poststructuralist discourse analysis advocates resistance from the ground-up and through coalitions of action (Baxter, 2007). As such prioritising the voices of women in the HR profession supports this potential but the main recognition for practical interventions, as per the poststructuralist grounding is the need for a greater range of diverse voices and perspectives that can reveal continuing insights into the way in which gendered discourses can shape the career experiences of women and men in the profession. The following explores the way in which the mainstream HRM and diversity textscape can increase the plurality of voices heard in the profession and the potential impact on career management experiences.

10. 3. 1 Mainstream HRM and diversity management textscape

A key criticism of mainstream HRM has been the lack of reflexivity in its approach. Critical and ethical approaches to HRM and diversity management have sought to expose the limitation of the mainstream approaches and their use of unitarist and individualistic discourses and assumptions (Greenwood and Freeman, 2012). In foregrounding of the concepts in commercial terms this leads to inequality and disadvantaged being perceived to be located in homogenous groups and that this exists independently of the socio-historical and economic context (Knights and Omanovic, 2016). This research contributes to ways in which understandings and experiences, beyond binary categories can be contested and deconstructed through professional body activities; curriculum and training and career interventions that could be of benefit to the career management experiences of women within the profession. Whilst these specific activities are emphasised they are considered within the context of the importance of revealing fluid and multiple forms of femininities and masculinities to the continually challenge the norms of hegemonic male dominated cultures that expect women from shifting intersectionality's to move towards it (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006).

10. 3. 2 The professional body textscape

A key place in which to shift the textscape in HRM and diversity management is through the CIPD, the professional body for HR in the UK. Whilst not representing all those people that work in HR in the UK their membership has a broad base. Their access to HR professionals through branch networks and research reports and publications means conversations about

the use of different language could be explored here. The findings contribute to the body of literature that has examined the role of discourse in the discursive practices of HR professionals and encourages greater reflection within the professional body for foregrounding the voices and women within the professions and how dominant discourses can impact outcomes for employees but also the career management experiences of those in the profession.

The findings, which exposed the impact of the business case discourses on the career management experiences of women in HR, contributes to arguments that there needs to be greater debate concerning issues of gender and what intersectionality means to the profession. There have been calls for a greater emphasis in the HR profession for a more intersectional approach to diversity management and the wider management of people (Knights and Omanovic, 2016). However, defining what this means in practices has not been clearly articulated. In the course of writing up this thesis there has started to be a shift in the language from the CIPD, which has started the process of questioning the business case terminology within mainstream practitioner literature (See CIPD 2018 Report Facing Up to the Business Case). A reflection point in relation to the findings of this report is that the discursive base for professions are the societies and cultures in which they are embed (Gunnarsoon, 2009). Regimes of truth within the professions and organisations are exposed to fluctuations in change and renewal, as change occurs in the wider societal and professional context. The changes in the language used by the CIPD in relation to emphasising a more social and moral approach for managing people more effectively represent the discursive experiences of the participants in this study and foregrounding the moral case for diversity management over the business case could start to help to shift the textscape in professional setting.

The CIPD (2018b) call for a 'mindful approach' for implementing diversity initiatives that only focus on one group, as everyone within that group may not benefit and there is a lack of conclusive evidence for the diversity 'business case', with both positive and negative outcomes possible from adopting this approach. This starts to change the textscape to recognise the potential limitations to mainstream HRM and diversity management approaches that could, as demonstrated in this thesis also negatively impact the experiences of career management in the HR profession. A contribution to practice from this thesis would be to encourage the CIPD to explore the role of binary and individualistic managing diversity

discourses and gender and intersectionality, in the career management experiences in the HR profession. Other intersectional studies seek to build coalitions of practice amongst groups within and outside of organisations that explore through the intersectional lens how groups share the experience of privilege and disadvantage (Thomas, 2010). Showuni, Atewologun and Bebbington (2015) in their mixed ethnic sample of female leaders highlighted how the participants did not acknowledge their privilege and suggested that managers and leaders need more training and exposure to the role of privilege in leadership career outcomes. Exploring the role of unnamed privilege can encourage coalitions of understanding and capacity to act in ways, which question account taken for granted assumptions that come from positions of privilege. The CIPD through their branch network could disseminate the changing textscape by encouraging coalitions of action amongst HR professionals. Branch events could begin debates and discussions concerning binary categorisations, intersectionality and gendered practices in the career outcomes of the profession. In doing so, recognition is given to CPD activities that explore both positive and negatives aspects of career management and outcomes, which is another contribution to practice from these findings.

The aims of the poststructuralist grounding would be achieved by emphasising the importance of spending more time listening to the women who make up the vast majority of the profession, in terms of how they experience gender through discourse from intersectional localities. Encouraging multiplicity in the female and male voices heard in the profession supports opportunities for activism within the profession through raised awareness of the limitations of the business case approach and the role of gender, ethnicity, class and broader intersectional categories at play in career and organisational outcomes. Activism from within the profession can be achieved through empowering communities within the profession to debate the role of privilege and power and how they impact key career management activities such as mentoring, role models and training and development. Emphasizing through CPD and branch events frayed careers histories, not based on idealised connotations of career success, would also support these goals.

Other intersectional studies have explored the importance of intersectional coalitions and communities and that these can be a useful alternative to single category subject groups. This has been one of the reasons that single category leadership and professional development activities, such as female leadership development or BME networks have been criticised for

failing to achieve significant change in relation to the representations of dominant groups at in organisations. Single category subject groups reconfirm the problem of diversity lies within individuals from marginalised groups rather than recognizing the wider structural power constraints with professions and organisations that need to be addressed. Cole (2008:443) proposes that forming coalitions and communities of change should *'think about social categories in terms of stratification brought about through practices of individuals, institutions and cultures rather than only as characteristics of individuals.'* Exploring intersectionality in groups helps to explore power differentials and to identify points of shared interest and working on areas of difference. This thesis supports the view that a feminist poststructuralist and intersectional lens provides the opportunities for building coalitions and communities of movement based on difference within the highly feminised profession of HRM.

10. 3. 3 Curriculum and training design

The impact of mainstream HRM and diversity management discourse on the career management experiences and outcomes for women within the profession could also be shaped through the HR curriculum and the way in which CIPD programmes are designed and delivered. The findings of this study contributes to a greater recognition of foregrounding the career experiences of women within the profession and the multiplicities of femininities and masculinities that can sustain unequal power structures. There is a focus in CIPD professional qualifications on continuing professional development (CPD) but this arguably lacks a critical reflective perspective on the key issues of gender and intersectionality and how they impact career outcomes. The findings of this study support the encouragement of CPD that account for the socio-historical and economic conditions shaping opportunities and barriers for individuals with shifting intersectional subjectivities. In the CPD space there could also be a greater refection on the role of discourses in shaping professional experiences. Duarate and Fitzgerlas (2006) highlight the role of reflexive and experience-based learning to facilitate this process of seeking to understand processes and dynamics within organisations better to understand the context of individuals and groups own identity complexity and fluidity. These practices could support CPD and academic discussions amongst HRM students of the role of dominant organisational and professional discourses that can impact, shape and curtail career management decisions in the profession. CPD is an already encouraged activity within the profession and this could be expanded to include reflexivity in

terms of how individuals reflect on their own social position and explore their actions in the context and contribution to the dynamics of power and systems of inequality and how these can challenged.

However, some caution is required, as whilst most HR qualifications in the UK are approved and accredited by the CIPD an HR qualification and or CIPD membership is not required to actually practice HR and the capacity of CIPD qualifications to develop critical engagement amongst HR professionals has been questioned (Gilmore and Willams, 2007). Hallier and Summers (2011) in their study of students on CIPD programme experienced how quickly they became assimilated in mainstream HRM thinking within the workforce even when exposed to more critical and ethical perspectives of HRM at university. Therefore, it is unlikely that curriculum change just to HRM programmes will be sufficient and there is a need to change the textscape within the wider business to incorporate more diverse voices and ethical and social approaches. Curriculum change within business school that takes account of the social, historical and economic conditions in which employees are managed and how these are shifting across generations, groups and individuals is one way in which to contest dominant discursive practices. Whilst curriculum change is viewed as important in HRM and more broader management programmes, recognition of the powerful gendered dominant practices and the way in which categorisations of social groups are often considered, as binary within organisations have been shown to be powerful in terms of the day-to-day practices of professionals and as such curriculum change should not be considered in isolation.

10. 3. 4 New approaches and discursive constructions of career interventions

The findings of the research also support calls for the career management research and interventions that reflect the 'darkside' and a 'more realistic discourse' of careers (Baruch and Vardi, 2015). Mainstream career management literature has been criticised for emphasizing the positive aspects of careers rather than recognising structural power dynamics at play. The emphasis on positive deceptions of choice, often based on middle-class ideals often miss the opportunity to explore how privilege and disadvantaged can be gained from 'frayed positions' (Sabelis and Schilling, 2013). Whilst seeking to avoided advocating one model or approach to career management, as this would be counter to the poststructuralist groundings of the research and in being vary of the what has been described, as the rise and

rise of career concepts, the findings of this research do suggest that exploring frayed careers in more depth could be a useful way for understanding the role of discourses and how they shape positions of privilege and disadvantage in women's and men's careers. Seeking to understand careers in a more rhythmic approach avoids the imposition of career goals and ideals that ignore the intersectional context. This would also support the creation of more credible and realistic role models, mentors and a focus on career interventions that account for positive and negative aspects of careers and take into account socio-historic and economic considerations, which are arguably missing from mainstream career interventions currently (Blustein et al 2015).

10. 4 Implications for policy

Argued in this thesis is the way in which mainstream HRM and diversity management can be contested by the alternative discursive practices of the participants at the intersectional lens and the way in which gender is done and undone in the HR profession. Moving away for single categorisations and binary approaches to difference and embedding intersectionality into policy would clearly be of benefit for HRM and diversity management policy making (Bagilhole, 2009). However, embedding intersectional and poststructuralism into policy has already been identified, as problematic, as those policy mechanisms and implementation are subject to the processes and structures it is trying to disrupt (Rodriguez et al (2016). Poststructuralist thinking has been successful to a degree in breaking down thinking in policy terms on categorical distinctions and emphasizing greater diversity in the categories of female and male. In practice shifts in workplace behaviours, irrespective of policy trying to change understandings based on non-binary and fluid differences have proved harder to achieve. In this respect the emphasis in policy should be on how inequality is 'done' rather then prevented. The focus then becomes how women and men from intersectional localities make policies come to be (Bacchi, 2016). The findings of this thesis support this position in that there is a less binary presentation of women marginalised groups against the dominant elite and there is a more intersectional and holistic view of privilege, disadvantaged and diversity in organisations and professions. So, whilst changes to policy are important a broader discussion that account for changes to the HRM and diversity management textscape is significant and for communities or coalitions from within these professions to contest and create change from the ground-up.

The analysis chapters also explored the sites of privilege and disadvantage from the intersectional perspective of the women. The way in which privilege is experienced amongst female managers is often unconscious and invisible, as attention in diversity research has tended to focus on experiences of disadvantage (Showunmi, Atewologun and Bebbington, 2016). Intersectionality has in common with feminist poststructuralism the position of not viewing women, and in particular women from minority groups, as unquestionably disadvantaged or victims (Syed and Ozbiligin, 2009). As is the case with participants in this research the women from different ethnic minorities and traditional lower-class backgrounds already assume what Atewologun and Sealy (2014) described as a 'sometimes privileged' position through their achieved managerial status and professional qualifications. In addition, given men are a minority group and potential 'other' in the feminised concentrated profession of HR (Pullen and Simpson, 2004) the analysis seeks to explore the complex ways in which masculinities and femininities play out in the discursive experiences of the participants to explore how privilege and disadvantage is both maintained and contested in the career management experiences of the women.

The commercial imperative in the HR profession emerges from the 'credibility' problem historically associated with the function due to its perception, as a 'female domain' (Legge, 1985) and 'new' managerial professional status (Watson, 2002). There has always been an imperative for HR professionals to demonstrate added value to the bottom line but this has been re-emphasised by structural changes inspired by the Ulrich Model (1997) that sought to make the HR profession '*more strategic*' and to become a '*genuine partner to the business'*. This has led to placing the commercial interests of business dominating HR professional textscape (Francis and Keegan, 2010). The discourse of 'being commercial' is inherently gendered due to the dominance of the hegemonic nature of white, middle class masculine culture and dialogue at the top of organisations where commercial and strategic activities occur (Mavin and Gandy, 2012). The following analysis explores how the quest for 'being commercial' and 'value added' (Watson, 2010) this impacts the career management experiences of the women through the intersectional lens.

10. 5 Limitations of the research

One of the main limitations identified with intersectional studies that predefine categories at the start of the research are the role of other social categories that have been identified, as out

of scope (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Gender, ethnicity and class were selected as the focus in this study, as they are identified areas of under- research in the HR profession. The use of the poststructuralist lens aimed to treat the categories in fluid ways. The emphasis on in-depth interviews and exploring the issues at length with the participants, also allowed the impact of other social categories to emerge. Nationality and first generational immigrant status emerged, as significant in the talk of the participants. Rodriques et al (2016) emphasized the increasing relevance of nationality in intersectional studies to reflect the transnational nature of organisations today. The findings in this thesis revealed that positions of privilege can be gained from the perspective of nationality in counterintuitive ways, such as a more deliberate and considered approach to language being perceived, as calm and confident when under pressure. Future research could explore the role of other social categorisations, such as nationality and their role in shaping the career management experiences of women in the HR profession in fluid and shifting ways.

From the feminist poststructuralist lens discourse analysis has been a primary method for investigating the shifting and contested way in which gender is produced and reproduced in organisations. Semi-structured interviews were used in this researcher design to explore the use of discourses and the discursive practices of the participants discussing their career experiences. An alternative interview approach, as favoured by Buzzanell et al (2015) in a feminist poststructuralist and intersectional study was the use of in-depth interviews and narratological critique, which supported the explicating of shifting, contradictory and ambivalent subject positions of black early career academics experiences of mentoring. The narratological stance allowed for the entirety of mentoring stories to analysed and compared with each other, whilst situating the experiences in the socio-political context. Chadwick (2017) also proposed the use of the narrative approaches to interviews, as a potentially rich methodological tool for intersectional analyses, particularly as they can access and give privilege to marginalized voices. This approach could be adopted in future studies exploring the career management experiences of women in the HR profession in the future through similar lenses.

A limitation of the interview approach, however is that participants are outside of their natural discursive space. An alternative approach would be to seek to capture discursive practices in naturally occurring career events such as networking and development. This could capture the relational and day-to-day discursive construction, as it takes place in the

participants professional life (Baxter, 2003). The role of dominant and gendered discourses could also be explored through a discourse analysis of professional publications and websites, which are key localities for disseminating mainstream messages and positions to the profession (Baxter, 2017). The following discussions explore in more depth limitations to the research before considering the possible future research directions that can be derived from the research

10. 5. 1 Participants

The sample of this thesis reflected Black Caribbean, Black African and white women participants from a range of socio-economic groups. The selection criteria and more details about their background are provided in the Methodology Chapter. The thesis has sought to explore differences and commonalities between minority ethnic groups. The range of ethnic minority women could have expanded to include a broader range of ethnicities. Nationality could also be used to explore in more depth the differences between minority ethnic groups and how this shaped their career management experiences. Riza Arifeen and Gatrell (2013) describe the absence of a consideration of gender and ethnicity with nationality and religion, as a potential blind spot and as such could be the focus of future research exploring the career management of experiences of women in the HR profession. In addition, whilst the women shared some commonality in their experiences of age the issues, as experienced at the extreme ends of the age bracket of the women in the sample could be examined in more depth, as could the age of the dependent children. As argued above as the greater range of intersectionalities, are understood and applied in the HR profession this helps to encourage a shift in the textscape of binary categorisations within dominant approaches to the management of people.

10. 5. 2 Researcher

Discourses and discursive practices are understood in relational terms, therefore the interview formed the site of discourse constructions and negotiation. The insider and outsider dichotomy has been explored elsewhere in this thesis but highlights how identifiable aspects of my background in terms of being white, middle class, lecturer and CIPD committee member, could have impacted the discursive constructions of the participants. This could include discursively constructing accounts in such a way, as they perceive them to be what I want to hear the 'purposes' of the research. Also, as HR professionals the participants are

exposed to selection interviews fairly regularly. Therefore, their discursive practices could reflect what the participants might say in a selection interview setting. In these settings there is a tendency for individuals to talk more positively about their career and seek to portray themselves in a positive light. I was vigilant to these practices and it was evident that as the interviews developed in length the participants would develop a more natural discursive style. This was also helped by a number of open questions at the start of the interview process to encourage the participants to talk in their natural discursive style.

10. 5. 3 Context

The research was conducted with women that were working and or living in East London. Often the participants had a long-standing relationship to the area, including growing up in the area. The research is not making claims of representation or generalisability, as this is not an expressed aim of feminist poststructuralism, which views knowledge as contextual, relational and provisional in nature (Baxter, 2008). Research seeks to focus on small-scale research rather than large scale survey research. In support of Mooney et al (2017) the depth of career management experiences undertaken here can be considered a strength not weakness in avoiding a research design that would have reflected the carer norms and experiences of dominant groups. Therefore, the desirability of conducting the research on a wider scale is rejected, as the emphasis is on gaining an in-depth understanding of women's careers experience through the intersectional lens and that knowledge is always provisional and contextual. However, given the importance of context and the specific socio-historical and economic context of East London it would be interesting to explore the career management experiences with female HR middle managers in other localities through a similar research design.

10. 6 Future research direction

A number of future research directions and opportunities emerge from the findings of this research. The first recommendation addresses calls for research to explore how both women and men in the same femininized profession perform femininities and masculinities, as this is identified under-researched area (Macdonald, 2013). Future research could explore the career management experiences of men in the HR profession to explore the role of gendered discourses of femininities and masculinities through an intersectional lens. This would

provide further discursive evidence to the fluidity and multiplicities of femininities and masculinities and their role in the HR profession. Another consideration would be to conduct this research longitudinally. In the context of career management a longitudinal view would also be beneficial to explore the shifting nature of dominant discourse and how they play out in relation to career management outcomes over time.

Another area to explore in the future would be sites of the 'unspeakability of inequality' (Kelan. 2014). This would address calls for more intersectional research that exposes the localities and incidences of where inequality and continuing discrimination cannot be named or is portrayed, as a thing of the past or as explored in this thesis, as happening elsewhere. This was a clear theme in the talk of the participants and further research could usefully explore in more depth other circumstances within the HR profession where inequality is silenced and the impact of this on career outcomes both within the HR profession and beyond. This research has also contributed to the complex discursive practices that take place in the constructions of what could be considered gatekeeping behaviours amongst the sample of HR middle manager and this is an identified area of future research. Harris and Ogbona (2016) call for more research to explore the role of gatekeeping in the continuation of inequalities in organisations. Future research in this area could focus in-depth on specific HR discourses, activities, and behaviours, which can create the conditions for gatekeeping in the profession.

Access to training was identified, as a potential barrier to career progression by the participants and given the recent findings of the large scale CIPD (2018c) survey that revealed similar concerns, further in-depth qualitative research exploring access to training and the contribution to careers in the profession is required. The inherent power structures in the profession that define who is perceived, as 'talented' and experiences of othering at different levels in the HR professional hierarchy could also be explored, particularly from the perspective of seeking to understand conditions of intra-gender relations and positive and negative behaviours associated with these relationships. This would address calls for more research in this areas (Carr and Kelan, 2016 and Marvin, Grandy and Williams, 2016) and contribute to emerging themes from this thesis.

10. 7 Reflexivity - a final note

 The undertaking of poststructuralist feminist discourse analysis requires continuous questioning of your own values and how these shape discourse interpretation and analysis of the talk of others (Baxter, 2008). The process of the research has meant inescapable reflection, as the transcripts of the interviews were read and re-read, on the way in which I am shaped and embedded in complex hegemonic and competing discourses and how these impact the way in which I adopt multiple subject positions. This impacted and changed my stance on how I viewed the data at different times and in shifting ways. Reassurance of this position was gained from exploring and becoming more immersed in feminist poststructuralism that meant coming to terms with an analysis grounded in the position that all knowledge is constructed, relational and provisional in nature.

As such I have been conscious of the responsibility of presenting the discursive practices of the women through the intersectional lens authentically, in acknowledging my status, as a middle-class, white female researcher and the relational impact of this in the interviews and my interpretation of their talk. I did seek to questions and make a note of when I found myself judging the talk of the participants. To illustrate; I noted feeling sceptical by the self-driven and confidence discourses used to justify negative treatment (even when in combination with other discourses) and sought to explore this position in view of the discourses that shape my own understanding and experiences of discrimination. I also sought not to compare and contrast the experiences of women from different class and ethnicity positions in obvious and binary ways and that did not reflect the shifting and blurred nature of the categories.

 The discursive construction of femininities and the feminine, as being less to masculinities and masculine ideals has been a feature of this thesis. I also made a note of when I fell into the trap of judging behaviours on the grounds of gendered norms. When the participants were constructing experiences of wanting help people in their roles I initially noted feeling this was not a very strategically significant thing to do or sounded too 'weak', rather than exploring how femininities and masculinities are framed, as such through discursive practices. In a similar way the last analysis section is structured around the discursive practices of the women commonly using 'I love working HR'. Given some of the difficult

career experiences of the women I was initially suspicious of this rather than focusing he ambiguities and tensions that can be exposed to exist through the intersectional lens.

 I also recognised the ways in which I could idealise the career experiences of the participants through listening to their experiences and some of the barriers they had overcome to reach their positions. It was important to be vigilant to the impact admiration and idealisation of the participants could have on the analysis processes. These experiences highlighted the importance of the reflexive process but also reaffirmed the importance of foregrounding the voices of women in the HR profession, particularly through the intersectional lens.

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Appendix 1 Information letter for participants

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

The Principal Investigator: Elaine Yerby (contact details)

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information that you need to consider in deciding whether to participate in this study.

Project Title

Exploring the career management experiences of female middle managers in the HR profession through a feminist poststructuralist and intersectional lens

Project Description

This research seeks to explore in-depth with female middle managers in the HR profession their career management experiences. The research is interested in exploring the key activities and experiences in the workplace that female middle managers experience, as potential barriers and enablers to their careers. The research takes the form of interviews that will be recorded but the data will be anonymized and keep confidentiality. The purpose of the interviews is to explore your current and previous career experiences, inside and outside of the profession, and future career management goals and objectives. This letter and the below consent form is provided to you so you know your consent is being requested both to freely take part in the research and consent to the research data being collected to be used in relevant peer reviewed publications and conference papers.

Confidentiality of the Data

Confidentiality and anonymity for participants is of paramount importance. You will not be identifiable from quotes or topics discussed in reports and academic papers that emerge as a consequence of the research. The researcher applies passwords to documents relating to this project and anything you say. The interviews will be audio recorded and the transcriptions will be conducted in a secure room where only the research team have access. Subsequent research data is then stored in accordance with data protection policy.

In addition, if a disclosure is made that indicates that the participant or someone else is at serious risk of harm such disclosures may be reported to the relevant authority.

Location

The research will take at the University or a site that is convenient for the participant and meets the requirement for confidentiality.

Disclaimer

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time during the research. Should you choose to withdraw you may do so without disadvantage to yourself and without any obligation to give a reason. Please note that your data can be withdrawn up to the point of data analysis – after this point it may not be possible.

For general enquiries about the research please contact the Principal Investigator on the contact details at the top of this shee**Consent to participate;**

Please tick as appropriate:

	YES	NO
I have the read the information leaflet relating to the above research in which I have been asked to participate and have been given a copy to keep. The nature and purposes of the research have been explained to me, and I have had the opportunity to discuss the details and ask questions about this information. I understand what is being proposed and the procedures in which I will be involved have been explained to me.		
The interviews will be audio recorded please confirm consent		
I understand that my involvement in this study, and particular data from this research, will remain strictly confidential as far as possible. Only the		

researchers involved in the study will have access to the data. *(Please see below)*		
I understand that maintaining strict confidentiality is subject to the following limitations: Participants' confidentiality will be maintained unless a disclosure is made that indicates that the participant or someone else is at serious risk of harm. Such disclosures may be reported to the relevant authority		
Anonymized quotes will be used in all publications of research material		
The proposed methods of publication to disseminate the research findings are internal reports, conference papers and peer reviewed publication		
It has been explained to me what will happen once the research has been completed.		
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time during the research without disadvantage to myself and without being obliged to give any reason. I understand that my data can be withdrawn up to the point of data analysis and that after this point it may not be possible.		
I hereby freely and fully consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me and for the information obtained to be used in relevant research publications.		

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Participant's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Investigator's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Investigator's Signature

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Date:

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Appendix 2 Interview questions

Topic guide

The following acted as the guide for the interviews. All of the topics were covered in each interview but did not necessarily follow the linear profession below. The emphasis was in the participants discussing in-depth key careers management events from their perspective

Introduction	Discuss with the participants confidentiality, anonymity, purpose of the research and ask for consent form to be filled in if not already
Opening	Tell me about how you started you started a career in HR What role did you family background pay in your career How would you describe your career to have evolved ? What have been key barriers and enablers?
Key events in your career	How and in what way would you describe key career events that have impacted your career?
Networking	What role does networking play in your career management?
Training and development	How would describe your experiences of training and development on career management experiences
Role models and mentors	How and in what ways have role models and mentors played in your career
Career planning and development	How would you describe your approach to career planning and development
Key relationships in career	What and how would you described key relationships inside and outside your professional life that are important to your career ?
Discrimination	How would you perceive the role of discrimination in your career?
Closing	Are there any other aspects of your career management you would like to discuss or think are important to the discussions with have been having?

Appendix 3 Ethics applications

Aston Business School

Elaine Yerby

ABS Research Student

Date: 1st August 2012

Dear Elaine,

I am pleased to be able to inform you that the ABS Research Ethics Committee has approved your ethics application. For future reference please quote 27:08/12

Best wishes

Professor Jim Love

(Associate Dean of Research)

Dear Elaine

Study Title: A Feminist Reappraisal of Careers in the Human Resource (HR) Profession in the UK

I am writing to inform you that the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has received your Ethical Review application form for SREC and an ethics approval letter from Aston Business School dated 1st August 2012, which you submitted to the Chair of UREC, Dr Lisa Mooney. You have requested, if necessary, ethics clearance for the option to add more participants to your study.

Please take this letter as written confirmation that the Chair has granted ethical clearance for you to recruit further participants to your study with the following conditions. Chair's approval is given on the proviso that the terms and reference to the programme of interviews, methods, site and situations have not changed. The parameters of your participants' involvement with regard to conditions and questions replicated must be the same as in the study which you received ethical approval from Aston Business School. Should you wish to make any changes to the study, other than adding more participants, you must contact UREC and you may be required to complete a new application for ethical approval.

As you have sought ethical approval for the study from two institutions, Aston Business School and the University of East London, it is critical that any subsequent reference to the ethical aspects of your research should be explained in an open and transparent way.

For the avoidance of any doubt, or misunderstanding, please note that the content of this letter extends only to those matters relating to the granting of *ethical clearance*. If there are any other outstanding procedural matters, which need to be attended to, they will be dealt with entirely separately as they fall outside the remit of the University Research Ethics

Committee. Any queries regarding ethical clearance should be emailed to the Research Integrity and Ethics Manager, Catherine Fieulleteau (e-mail C.Fieulleteau@uel.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

For and on behalf of

Dr Lisa Mooney
Chair, UEL University Research Ethics Committee

c.c Dr Lisa Mooney, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Exchange and Chair of the University of East London Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
Dr Carlos De Luna, Head of the Graduate School