'Exploring the doctoral motivations of Irish higher education professionals: a narrative inquiry'

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Abstract

This thesis examines the experiences of professional staff, other than academic staff, working within Irish higher education while pursuing a doctorate in education. The research question is "*To what extent do the narratives of professional staff working in Irish higher education reveal their motivations for pursuing a doctorate in education*?" The study employs narrative inquiry both as the methodology and the phenomenon under observation as it examines the data derived from the narratives of five higher educational professionals working in different Irish higher education institutions. The conceptual framework for the study was based on Connelly and Clandinin's approach to narrative inquiry which in turn is grounded in a Deweyan theory of experience. The data was presented in two parts. The first part made visible different aspects of individual experience by presenting a storied account of each research participant using their own words as illustration. The second part presents six main themes and a further twenty-four sub-themes which emerged during the interviews and analysis of the life grid responses. The six main themes were: previous experiences of education; motivations for undertaking a doctoral qualification; relationships; identity; support networks; and after the doctorate. The reasons for doctoral study are complex and individuals choose it for multiple reasons. I would argue that all of the themes and sub-themes are relational in terms of motivations for undertaking doctoral research and that stories that people live and tell, matter.

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"Th' whole worl's in a terrible state o' chassis"
(Sean O'Casey, 1924)

1. Contextualising the Research

It must be said unequivocally from the outset, that the rationale for this research area was borne from a personal crisis of identity. This crisis of identity has evolved or at least come to a head because of my decision to undertake a professional doctorate in the field of higher education at the University of Sheffield, studying with academics and professional people from all walks of life and institutions. As a professional librarian working in an Irish higher education context, I have found that my identity has become more fluid in recent years, surprisingly becoming aligned less with the profession of librarianship and more with the idea of being part of a third level education institution that strives to provide "an innovative, responsive and caring learning environment" for its students (Dublin Institute of Technology, 2011) However, this identity is not necessarily how academics or senior management perceive librarians or other professional staff working and researching in this context. Indeed, at a recent seminar on research attended mainly by academic librarians, I listened with interest as an Irish academic spoke about her view of a higher education community which was not a single entity but rather a collaborative endeavour where all voices were important in the effort to support students to become mature in their chosen disciplines. She spoke further about collaborating experts having a capacity for happiness and while I was caught temporarily in the warm glow of convivial engagement, this was hastily banished when the next speaker, an academic librarian, got up to talk about their efforts to persuade academics that librarians were not only part of the collaborative endeavour but that information literacy was worth embedding into the higher education curriculum.

Other voices in the literature recognise that to encompass the totality of academic life it is essential to not only recognise the importance of the roles played by other professionals, including librarians, in both supporting teaching and research and influencing student learning but also to work more closely with them (McAlpine et al., 2008, p. 122-123). Indeed, the idea of higher education as a collaborative space is nothing new. Szekeres (2011, p. 689) talks about the need for a "respectful cooperative space" within a "cooperative community based on trust and respect for each other's roles" while Nixon (2014, p. xiv) refers to "a sense of 'multivocality' – of inclusivity that is respectful of difference and divergence across educational contexts". It is clear that relationships in academic organisations are complex by their very nature. For Kuo (2009, p. 43) both academics and administrators play central and critical roles in their institutions but he agrees with Clark (1983) when he argues that they should be regarded as two cultural organisations that "regularly communicate and interact with each other" while fostering "separate and distinct cultures". For Clark (1985, p. 53) integration and collaboration between the different groups in higher education requires a "unity in diversity" with "respect for differences and trust in the choice of others".

Others contend that collaborative work practices and integration are not made easy by the separate worlds academics and professionals inhabit, and the disconnection between the two (Szekeres, 2011; Allen-Collinson, 2007). Indeed a recent article in the Times Higher Education offered two diverging opinions from an academic and an administrator about the rules of engagement between the two tribes. While the academic argued for administrators to present themselves as support to those on the academic stage rather than occupying the stage themselves, the administrator put

forward clear working suggestions for administrators to consider while conceding that unilateral action is only half the solution and that to achieve a harmonious and therefore effective university, both university managers and academics have to urgently address issues of collegiality and inclusivity (Taylor and Underwood, 2015).

My original research idea was concerned with gathering the experiences of those academics seeking to be "research active" within their own institution and examining the concept of identity as it applied to the teacher and/or researcher role but as I began to read around the literature in this area it became clear early on that as a librarian in higher education, my own "story" or "identity" was either missing or not explained adequately in the higher education literature. Interestingly Moen (2006, p. 6) has suggested that traditionally teachers have experienced that they do not have their own voice in the field of educational research and have not always felt empowered to tell their stories. It became apparent to me, that I, labelled as a "non-academic", could not adequately tell the story of those who were. Furthermore, there have been too many occasions when I have felt intimidated or have lacked the vocabulary or voice to communicate fluently and naturally with academics. For me this was a conundrum of sorts and one which led to a long period of stagnation for me undertaking my doctoral research because I could not get past the idea that I as a librarian, should not be doing this research and that in many ways I was an outsider attempting to be an insider, or at least attempting to be something other than I was! The term "imposter phenomenon" was used initially by Clance and Imes (1978) when they described how a sample of high achieving women all experienced a feeling of intellectual phoniness surrounding their academic accomplishments but more recently it can be found within the higher education literature to describe how many doctoral students often feel that they are

intellectual frauds or imposters especially when they are not from a traditional disciplinary background. When I was originally applying for the doctorate this feeling was enforced further for me when I was advised by a senior academic in the School of Education in Sheffield, that the General Education route as opposed to the Higher Education option on the EdD programme might be the more suitable choice for an academic librarian, advice which I am thankful that I ignored.

It is argued that librarians are probably one of, if not the most, stereotyped professions although, according to Pagowsky and Rigby (2014, p. 1) "there is a sense that the stereotype discussions are exhausted, and though there is excellent work being done in the realm of stating the value of libraries and librarians, there is a common sentiment that we should not have to state and restate our value so regularly". Furthermore "articulating the value of libraries and librarians is the zeitgeist of 21st-century librarianship; one does not need to look far to find articles about the fading importance of libraries" (ibid, pp. 1-2). Indeed Greta Van Susteren, a former Fox News host in America, caused controversy in 2017 and provoked the ire of academic librarians everywhere when she tweeted that new libraries in third level institutions were "vanity projects" and the services provided by academic libraries were "available on our smartphones". Equally, there are voices in the literature, especially in the professional literature around librarianship, who claim that these negative views and stereotypes exist within our higher education institutions (HEIs) and therefore articulating the value of libraries and librarians within higher education is not an easy task (Pagowsky and Rigby, 2014). Indeed, there are many descriptors and labels assigned not only to academic librarians but to the group of academically oriented but not strictly academic professional staff working in close quarters with both academics

and students in higher education. A cursory glance at the literature will find such staff referred to as support staff, general staff, administrative staff, non-academics, non-teaching staff, professional staff and more recently, third space professionals (Whitchurch, 2008), blended professionals (Whitchurch, 2008), HEPROs (higher education professionals) (Kehm, 2012), borderless professionals (Middlehurst, 2010), support professionals (Rhoades, 2001), and hybrid professionals (Whitchurch, 2009). This list is not exhaustive and indeed these and other terms are appearing in the literature along with discussion about "academic boundaries", "identity stretch" or expanding identities (Whitchurch, 2009, p. 6). Berman and Pitman (2010, p. 158) suggest that the range of the descriptors reflect not only the diversity of the roles but to some extent "differing views on the value and importance of these roles". Peacock (2001, p. 7) agrees and asks if these "labels affect perceptions of value, and pathways to participation" for librarians especially in the learning and teaching process?

Much of the literature surrounding the area of both academic and professional identities has focussed and continues to focus on the idea of exclusion or "negative labelling" with professional staff frustrated and sometimes denigrated by the terms used to describe them (Allen-Collinson, 2009, p. 952). While this theme will be more closely observed in the literature review chapter, I have deliberately chosen throughout this work not to use the term "non-academic" to describe professional staff especially those who have participated in my research. The term "non-academic" appears frequently in the literature but is considered by many to be an exclusionary concept and one that is often contested and challenged as an unacceptable way to define people "by what they are not" (Collinson, 2006; Dobson, 2000, p. 205).

What has since become clear to me is that there *is* a need to tell this particular story. Within Irish third level education there are professional staff groupings not on academic contracts, some of whom based in my own institution, pursuing education doctorates and seeking to engage in research. Some of those are actively pursuing a professional doctorate in education in the UK or in Ireland, where the education doctorate was introduced in 2004, but their narratives and therefore their reasons for doing so are missing from the higher education literature. My own experience of undertaking doctoral research in the UK has shown me that this phenomenon is not confined to Ireland. Indeed for some of the professionals occupying this space, both in Ireland and the UK and possibly beyond, it would appear that there is generally a lack of status for the research they are engaged in. It seems to me that a study of the lives, stories and experiences of this group could make a useful and interesting contribution not only to the literatures on identity and professional doctorates in higher education, especially in Ireland, but also to the literature on professional working lives in Irish higher education and beyond. There appears to be little discussion on how professional staff undertaking professional doctorates in education are considered, utilised, and even supported by their institutions. While the research questions for this study will be identified more clearly towards the end of the chapter, this inquiry does intend to reflect on the reality of this group in their working environments while negotiating the complexity of their everyday roles and relationships. Furthermore this study will also examine the significance both of the personal biographies (including academic achievements) and institutional affiliations of the research participants and how they might contribute to identity and relationships and to see the extent to which their identities and relationships have influenced their decision to undertake a doctorate. For some it is biography which is the influencing factor:

> biography is, and always will be, the crucial factor affecting perceptions and experiences. What has happened to us in the past affects the things that happen to us in the present, both through the social, cultural, academic and economic capital we possess and are able to draw on, and through the identities we have developed and had attributed to us.
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> (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, p. 732)

This idea that biography is integral to our own life experiences and to how others perceive us resonates with me partly because of my own personal reasons for undertaking a doctoral qualification and also because of the way that librarians are often stereotyped not just in popular culture, but often within the very academic institutions where they work. Although this thesis is not a scholarly examination of the librarian stereotype it is nonetheless interesting to look at what some of the writers in this field of librarian identity are saying. Green (1994) for example argues that it is not so much the stereotype that is damaging to the perception and status of librarians but rather the lack of understanding about what they do. Although the value of the work that librarians do should take the spotlight, often "when librarian stereotypes have a strong presence, they activate heuristics, or mental shortcuts, for defining what librarians do" (Pagowsky and Rigby, 2014, p. 5). I referred earlier to negative labelling and stereotyping within HEIs across many professional areas of work so while understanding that each individual and their narrative is unique, it is also important to look across the narratives to gain an understanding of some of the similar patterns which may occur among these individuals in relation to identity issues and also some aspects of their experiences, particularly those which may have led to them choosing to study for a doctorate, which are different.

When an experienced doctoral supervisor was asked by Wellington (2013, p. 1500) to define a doctorate, they replied "it's a hugely challenging personal journey which brings into relief sometimes many issues that you thought you could leave behind but

can't". Furthermore, as Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) have observed, one of the first considerations in situating a study is the compelling need to understand a particular issue or topic that presses you and which may also deter your practice, your community or your society. For me, as a librarian, this personal, challenging journey is certainly bringing into relief many issues that refuse to be left behind and therefore there is an opportunity here to redress the balance in the literature and to gather some of the narratives from the group of higher education professionals undertaking a doctorate in education and investigate their motivations for doing so and their experiences as depicted through their stories.

This thesis therefore seeks to open up a conversation about a rather under-researched area in Irish third level education, that is, groups of professional staff other than academic lecturing staff, employed within the various institutions in an academic context, but not on academic contracts, who are also pursuing a doctorate in Education (EdD). This research will attempt to explore and gain an understanding of their reasons for pursuing the EdD and their lived experiences surrounding their everyday working and personal environments while carrying out research for their doctorate, especially in relation to any potential issues or conflicts around their perceived role and identity. If as Nixon (2014, p. xiii) suggests "change starts with lived experience and working practice" and with the "everyday and the ordinary" then an examination of the lived experiences of this group of professionals to try and realise the commonplace could be a valuable and perhaps insightful contribution to the literature in Irish higher education and beyond. Additionally the idea of the "centrality of personal experience and its use as a source of knowledge" will inform the way in which the subsequent narratives of this group of professionals will be

analysed and interpreted in an effort to elicit both commonalities and differences in their experiences (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 170).

I will now attempt to contextualise the research aims by outlining briefly a history of Irish third level education before explaining further the area of study and the specific questions to be addressed in this thesis. Furthermore, this chapter will identify some of the key areas to be addressed in the literature review before outlining the subsequent chapters.

1.1 Higher Education: a Transformed Space

1.1.1. *An Irish context*

References to the major transition in higher education in Ireland and beyond within the past few decades are impossible to miss in the current literature. Indeed one could be forgiven for thinking the words of Sean O'Casey above were contemporary, written to explain the current flux and "chaos" in higher education globally. As Nixon (2008, p. 15) observes, wider societal changes have left universities "seeking to understand, on behalf of society, upheavals that are shaking its own institutional foundations". These pressures have compelled universities to increase the scope and range of their activities (Mears and Harrison, 2014). Factors influencing such change have included: the massification of higher education; the increasingly global marketplace; the acquisition of a wider range of obligations for HEIs (often under pressure from governments); and the shift in the balance from public to private financing of higher education (Gordon and Whitchurch, 2010, p. ix). In Ireland, changes to higher education, often referred to as the third level sector, have occurred in line with both major social and economic change transitioning Ireland from a

period of sustained economic growth where the "Celtic Tiger" roared and the country enjoyed economic prosperity to a period of economic stagnation with severe constraints on public finances within a sustained recession. In recent times the relatively small third level sector has come under pressure, especially from government, to modernise and be positioned at the forefront of the so-called innovative knowledge-based economy (Hunt, 2011; Loxley and Seery, 2012). Indeed, as evidenced in the literature, this development of higher education systems has become a global phenomenon as "post-industrialisation countries jostle to gain or maintain a positional advantage over each other in the milieu of what is euphemistically referred to as economic and cultural globalisation" (Loxley and Seery, 2012, p. 5).

Following the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 the four main universities, Trinity College Dublin (TCD) and the three constituent colleges of the National University of Ireland (NUI), "historically enjoyed a high degree of institutional autonomy" (Walsh, 2014, p. 6). As Walsh (2014, p. 7) attests, while the universities differed in both their religious and cultural outlooks, they "shared similar characteristics: they attracted only a small minority of the population; were severely under-resourced and were oriented strongly towards training for the professions". Indeed, as in the UK, this elitist structure tended to reinforce social divisions with entry to universities confined to a small segment of the population and almost exclusively determined by social and family background. Challenge to this elitist higher education system came in the 1950s with a new government led by Sean Lemass introducing political change and new policies including the idea of equal opportunity for all. With recognition in the 1960s that third level education in Ireland

was in need of reform and development, a regulatory body in the form of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) was introduced in 1968 with a student grant scheme launched in the same year to make supporting funds available for participating students. In the 1990s further development was underway with the 1991 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 'Review of National Policies for Education: Ireland' and the introduction of free tuition fees for undergraduate study.

As in the UK and most advanced economies, Ireland experienced a shift from elite to mass third level education participation and in recent decades the demand for third level places increased significantly. Ireland operates a binary higher education system with seven universities and fourteen Institutes of Technology (IoTs). In addition there are a number of teacher training colleges and several private colleges. Although the IoTs began as regional technical colleges (RTCs) they steadily outgrew their original remit of providing vocational and sub-degree qualifications, and began to offer degree and postgraduate qualifications while also engaging in some research and consultancy work (O'Byrne, 2014). In the 1990s the RTCs were re-designated as IoTs and subsequently with the 2006 Institute of Technologies Act, they were removed from the governance of the Department of Education and Science (DES) and were, along with the universities, placed under the authority of the HEA. This act was in many ways recognition that the IoTs had taken on additional activities and expanded their role in the third level sector. While the Act delegated awarding status to the majority of the IoTs, it did not allow "operational freedom" hence the HEA has retained the power to approve budgets and sanction academic contracts and promotions (O'Byrne, 2014, p. 16). Indeed, while giving academic staff in the IoTs academic freedom on a

par with the universities, the institutions were required to comply with certain policies including promoting the "economic, cultural and social development of the state" (Walsh, 2014, p. 47). However, as O'Byrne (2014, p. 16) claims, despite an emphasis from government on higher education involvement in the "smart" economy and the development of a "national research infrastructure" baseline provision for research and other activities outside of teaching is not available for the IoTs.

One of the largest institutions in the state, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) made successive attempts in the 1990s to be re-designated as a university and although these attempts ultimately failed, more recently, even as the Hunt Report (2011) and OECD Report (2004) advocated "institutional diversity" and warned against "mission drift" several IoTs were pursuing an agenda to be re-designated as universities including once again, the DIT. In 2013, the Dublin Technological University Alliance (DTUA) comprising of DIT and two smaller Dublin based IoTs, was formed and is now preparing for Dublin Technological University designation as recommended by the Minister for Education and Skills. Indeed, Seery (2014) suggests that as public funding to higher education continues to fall both as a result of Ireland's economic crisis and the growing realisation that higher education is not the only contributor to knowledge generation and dissemination, there is considerable pressure to reduce the number of institutions through mergers. Currently in the Dublin area, there are three Colleges of Education from both a Catholic and Protestant background set to merge under the umbrella of Dublin City University (DCU).

With the shift from elite to mass participation in Irish third level education, there has been exponential growth in the non-university sector especially with the increase in

the number of student enrolment leading to greater numbers of students in the IoTs than in their university counterparts. Much of this impact and diversification has been the result of a coherent government strategy influenced by international recommendations from the 2004 OECD report on knowledge generation and investment in research.

1.1.2. *Knowledge-based economy*

As with other advanced political economies, the "production and exploitation of knowledge" has been the key driver to mass higher education (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 180). As Ireland has shifted from elite to mass participation in higher education, there has been recognition of the significant contribution the graduate base can make to such a knowledge based economy. Behind state intervention and investment in Irish third level education in the 1980s, was recognition of the significant role HEIs could play in shaping and creating a knowledge-based economy. This idea of higher education as a key driver in a knowledge based economy was reinforced by the 2004 OECD review of Irish education policy and has subsequently influenced funding for third level (Walsh, 2014). Indeed, the Higher Education Strategy Group in their 2011 report, National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt Report) made specific reference to the critically important role of higher education in Irish society and expressed the concern that it should continue its potential to energise and enrich Irish society by delivering "personal, social and economic capital" (Hunt, 2011, p. 3). Not only can a "better qualified and productive workforce" contribute to future economic growth but the expectation exists that the benefits will spill into other areas of civic and public life (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 176).

This recasting of the university in Irish society as a service provider "central to the development of a knowledge-driven economy and economy" is echoed globally with pressure on institutions to "pursue research and teaching activities that will potentially be of wider economic value" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 176). Traditionally there has been a lack of funding and investment in research within an Irish third level context so with this repositioning and modernisation has come a significant expansion in the scale of competitive funding available to institutions. With various government initiatives put in place, research has developed from being on the margins of university activities to a position where it is now foregrounded. Initiatives have included The Programme for Research in Third level Institutions (PRTLI) which was created in 1998 highlighting the important role to be played by research in sustaining and growing the economy. This was followed by the establishment in 2000 of Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) which was tasked with the responsibility to distribute over €4 billion in funding to "specific research activity in priority areas" with a "strong focus on developing economically strategic areas for research" (Walsh, 2014, p. 49).

Furthermore, based on the recommendations from the OECD report in 2004 to promote research and expand postgraduate numbers the government launched their new strategy for Science Technology and Innovation 2007-2013 which aimed to double the number of PhD graduates within a seven year period (Walsh, 2014). The dominant discourse was that of a knowledge-based economy and successive reports including the National Skills Strategy in 2007 and the Hunt Report 2011, played into this theme. In particular the Hunt Report (2011, p 29) emphasised the contribution of higher education to economic recuperation with the assertion "higher education is the key to economic recovery in the short term and to longer-term prosperity".

As Hunt (2011, p. 9) attests "the quality and reputation of Irish research is now achieving impact internationally" impacting across all aspects of Irish society and the economy. It seems clear that in a globally competitive research environment universities will have to harness the potential of all staff and should especially, according to Berman and Pitman (2010, p. 165) utilise "research trained, professional staff understandings of research culture in universities" which can "provide for collegiality and can act as a bridge in the alleged academic-general staff divide". While this idea of professional and institutional division in contemporary higher education permeates the literature, Cook and Gornall (2014, p. 278) suggest that if there is to be greater collaboration and integration among the various stakeholders, then there must be serious consideration "given to the nature, culture, practices and techniques of working across the boundaries of space, place, identity and team".

As I have outlined earlier, in Ireland as in the UK, with the increasing emphasis on a knowledge-based economy, the opportunities for doctoral education have increased significantly with an increasing diversity often attributed to "the changing social, political and economic landscape, perhaps best captured in the notion of the 'knowledge economy' and its reconfiguration of our understanding of knowledge production and what constitutes legitimate knowledge" (Boud and Tennant, 2006, p. 294). It would seem that the research doctorate, "once the domain of an elite few", has become "a professional qualification across a wide range of high-order intellectual, professional and work domains" (Boud and Lee, 2009, p. 3). Furthermore doctoral-level education is "intensive and lengthy; it represents a significant investment by a society" and therefore there is an expectation "of considerable returns by way of

enhancing the sponsoring country's position in the race to attract both research and development funding and knowledge-based industry" (Servage, 2009, p. 766).

Since a wide group of professional staff based in HEIs choose to pursue a doctorate in education, it seems clear that the benefits of their research understandings should be investigated more thoroughly. If, as the Economic and Social Research Council (2005, p. 93) state "professional doctorates aim to develop an individual's professional practice and to support them in producing a contribution to (professional) knowledge" it seems reasonable to assume that these individuals do have a significant contribution to make within their everyday working environment. From Scott et al. (2004) there is a suggestion that this contribution may be of more value to the individual than to the institution or educational practice as a whole, with opportunities for the doctoral student to "reflect on and illuminate their own practice".

It will be interesting to gather the stories of those professional staff working in various Irish HEIs while also engaged in the pursuit of a doctorate in education to see if their research life has impacted on their working situations, and perhaps also to see if any narratives reveal that institutions have harnessed any of this research potential for the institutional good. Before identifying further the research questions this chapter will now take a brief look at the emergence of different professional identities in third level education.

1.1.3. *Shifting identities in higher education*

If as Nixon (2014) suggests, "education is, at its very best, commonplace: grounded in the reality of our everyday lives" then those everyday lives cannot fail to have been

influenced by the seismic changes which have occurred in higher education. The wider processes of social and economic change and the emergence of the "knowledge society" cannot have happened without significant impact on the "organisational fabric of higher education and institutions" accelerating the pace of change to the academic profession (Kehm and Teichler, 2012, p. 1). As Mears and Harrison (2014, p. 281) observe "wider policy initiatives have generated a more complex organisational structure" and this has resulted in a complex division of labour. The overall identity of universities and other HEIs have been affected which has had profound impact on the lived experiences of the individuals involved, not just the academics and students but other professional staff working in them. Certainly as Tomlinson (2013, p. 2) acknowledges, "an increasing focus within the sociology of education and work has been one of the ways in which these changes have been interpreted and managed by individuals as they seek to make sense of their wider economic futures".

All of these transformations have had significant implications for academic faculty but as Henkel (2010, p. 3) observes, they are only "one dimension of the changes that have occurred in the workforces of higher education institutions". While considerable attention has been paid to the implications of a changing environment for academic identities less attention has been paid to the impact of a shifting environment on other professional staff within higher education (Henkel, 2000; Barnett and di Napoli, 2008). Certain aspects of academic practice and indeed staff in less mainstream professional or occupational roles remain poorly documented and under-theorised (Macfarlane, 2005; Whitchurch, 2012).

As we can see clearly above, in Ireland as in the UK, there has been significant change to the third level landscape over a period of several decades. Many of these changes, including innovations in technology, knowledge working, growth of quality enhancement systems, etcetera have all contributed to a much more complicated occupational structure with new roles and identities emerging in higher education globally and in an Irish context. With these new roles have come "new forms of professionalism" and "new forms of division of work and cooperation between the academic profession and other professionals in higher education" (Kehm and Teichler 2012, p. 1). This has caused some observers to claim that with this co-operation between academics and other professionals has come a less clear delineation between their differing roles leading to a dislocation of academic identity (Whitchurch, 2012). Whitchurch (2013, p. xii) has explained further how the "concept of service has become re-oriented towards one of partnership with academic colleagues, students and external agencies". Within these partnerships a sort of "blended role" appears which comprise elements of traditional academic and professional activity (Whitchurch, 2010). Furthermore, pressure from newer professions and other occupational groups with aspirations for recognition and status have contributed to "new defining communities" within higher education and the development of "third spaces" or "convergence" between academics and administrators (Henkel 2010, p. 4; Whitchurch, 2012, p. xii).

For Rhoades (2010, p. 51) the academic workforce has become "increasingly specialized and differentiated" and he suggests that universities must "tap into the reality of professional careers in the university today" and "envision invisible workforces" to enhance intellectual capital in our society. A cursory glance at the

higher education literature shows that "less boundaried forms of identity are emerging in higher education" and Whitchurch (2013, p. 137) offers the "third space" as a conceptual framework for those groups who may be on the fringe of such activities. The fringe groups identified by Whitchurch (2013) include; research managers, educational technologists, academic developers/academic practice professionals, and information and library professionals. Interestingly she also draws attention to the idea that those professionals operating within the third space represent added value in a way that "reinforces academic agendas" and explains this further:

> The ability to add value is also likely to include thinking outside the box, developing social and professional capital, taking the part of others, interpreting and translating between interest groups, and generally extending institutional intelligence. It may also incorporate a sense of contributing to the maturation of institutions and their component parts. This is likely to be a joint process, with responsibility on institutions to recognise and respond to the initiatives of individuals, and an onus on individuals to demonstrate the added value of their activity.
>
> (Whitchurch, 2012, p. 140)

What becomes clear is that not only are there more mixed spaces for these professional groups to occupy but indeed the opportunity exists for them both as an individual or in a group, to crossover into less mainstream careers (Whitchurch, 2013). Hence, with increasing numbers of professional staff pursuing and obtaining doctorates in education, there is an opportunity here for institutions to utilise these research trained professionals and allow them to "demonstrate the added value of their activity" (Whitchurch, 2012, p. 140). This is especially true if, as Rosser (2004, p. 329) claims, the morale of professional staff is improved if they feel able to "contribute to the organization's overall common purpose". It would seem that many of these "invisible workers" within higher education are becoming increasingly more "credentialed and more professional" but have yet to "claim their space in

universities" (Rhoades, 2010; Szekeres, 2011, p. 689). At a time of pessimism in academic life, Barnett (2014, p. 296) believes "the much more interesting and challenging task is that of searching for sources of optimism".

This conversation on the area of shifting identities in higher education will be continued in the Literature Review chapter where the theories of identity as a social construct will be explored in more detail. I will now address the specific field of study for this piece of research and outline the research questions.

1.2 Field of Study: Research Question and Aims

1.2.1. *Brief Rationale*

I have previously outlined some of the context behind my reasons for pursuing this particular research question. Wellington and Sikes (2006) have argued that it is often biography which is the most crucial factor affecting perceptions and experiences. Certainly, for me, as the first member of my family, excepting two aunts who studied nursing, to go on to higher education and obtain academic qualifications, this idea resonates and would seem to be one of the compelling factors in my decision to continue education as a mature doctoral student. Furthermore, after working in the field of librarianship for over twenty five years, starting out in various roles within public libraries, continuing in senior management roles in government libraries and finally working in an academic library environment, it has not been uncommon to meet with negative stereotyping and labelling. Most frustratingly of all, in my experience, the academic environment has often shown the most ignorance not only about the role librarians play within the institution but also their contribution to the area of learning and teaching.

Within the higher education literature commentators and researchers have written of collaboration, partnerships and emerging concepts of the "new academic team" in higher education, where librarians along with academic departments and university administrators share the responsibility for supporting skills development and creating new learning environments where the conditions are created for students to engage actively with their own learning (CONUL, 2005). This is certainly not the reality in many third level institutions where librarians still jostle for space in these learning environments to teach fundamental information literacy. In some third level institutions in Australia and the USA, academic librarians are not only regarded as academic staff in the same way that teaching staff are considered to be, but are afforded the same pay and conditions and treated with equal status. Peacock (2001) argues that those librarians with faculty status and rank are generally more likely to be perceived as peers by their academic colleagues. This seems in direct comparison to the experiences of many individuals, not only librarians, working in higher education who don't feel valued or who feel that they are invisible or unheard in their institution (Rhoades, 2010). Despite claims that universities are in transition from a "community of scholars to a community of professionals" (Gordon and Whitchurch, 2007, p. 4) others argue that it is time for professionals to stop behaving like traffic wardens and for academics to stop seeing them in this role (Szekeres, 2011).

Perhaps the view that academics and professionals have contrasting purposes needs to be challenged and while this study will not attempt to do that, it will be interesting to explore some of the reasons why higher education professionals, including librarians, have chosen to undertake a doctorate in education, but also to observe how they navigate their identity and relationships within their working environment. While

many Irish third level institutions have made a financial contribution to some professional staff groups pursuing education doctorates, there appears to be little research around their reasons for doing so and the potential value this production and use of research has for everyday practice in the participating institutions. Therefore it will be interesting to see if the narratives reveal any instances of innovative practices within these institutions in terms of garnering this research potential or indeed evidence of possible differences in levels of support from the institutions of those undertaking their doctoral research. As observed by Berman and Pitman (2010, p. 167) universities need to "utilize the potential of all staff" in order to successfully compete in a changing competitive environment and so, the question could be asked, in this new knowledge based economy, *do* the institutions utilise and value the skills gained by their professional staff pursuing education doctorates? Furthermore, do the research trained professional staff themselves value and use their skills not only within their working environments but also within their professional lives?

1.2.2. *Research Questions*

This research study is entitled 'Exploring the doctoral motivations of Irish higher education professionals: a narrative inquiry' and the main aim was to gather and explore the experiences and narratives from a particular group of professional staff working within Irish third level education while also pursuing a doctorate in education. The education doctorate and its beginnings will be explored in more depth in the literature review chapter but to define it briefly, it is part of the family of professional doctorates which were introduced in the UK in 1992 to provide a higher form of professional development. Scott et al. (2004) describe the doctorate in education as a professionally focussed doctorate specifically for those working in the

area of education who would like to reflect on, learn from and research their practice while gaining an advanced qualification in an increasingly credential-based world of work. The group I targeted for this research study were from professional backgrounds working within an academic context but not necessarily employed on academic contracts. The group included: research managers; information and library professionals; educational technologists; academic developers, etc. After reviewing the literature in some depth, it appears that this topic remains under-explored especially in an Irish context. The rationale for this research is based on the assumption that HEIs should support, consider and utilise professional staff understandings gained from undertaking their professional doctorates in education.

Often our research interest is "percolating inside" for many years unknowingly but as Butler-Kisber (2010, p. 26) acknowledges, the difficult step can be to translate this interest "into actual research questions" and so for this study, I present my actual research question followed by three supplementary questions:

- To what extent do the narratives of professional staff working in Irish higher education reveal their motivations for pursuing a doctorate in education?

There are 3 supplementary questions and they are:

- To what extent do the narratives reveal a relationship between previous and present educational experiences?

- To what extent do the narratives show the impact of pursuing a doctorate on their personal and professional life?

- To what extent do the narratives reveal how the identities of professional staff are shaped and influenced by the relationships within their working environments?

The methodology chosen to investigate these research questions is narrative inquiry and this approach, along with my reasons for choosing it, will be considered in more detail in the chapter on methodology. As there are multiple interpretations of how to approach narrative research I have shown some of those distinctions and where I have chosen to locate this study. Scholars such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Donald Polkinghorne in conversation with Clandinin and Murphy (2007, p. 633) all see narrative research as the study of experience, especially an individual's life experiences, and as "a knowledge of the particular, the unique". As this study explores the experiences of individuals and their motivations for choosing to do a doctorate in education it seemed clear to me, after considering a variety of methodological approaches, that narrative inquiry was the natural approach to both understand and represent these experiences. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 18) attest "experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and key way of writing and thinking about it". Narrative research is therefore a relational form of inquiry where ethics must be central to the research process. As Geertz (1988, pp. 130-131) has eloquently stated "the gap between engaging others where they are and representing them where they aren't" should be a visible part of our research. As a narrative inquirer we must narrate life always with the acknowledgement that it is "a site of moral responsibility" (Richardson, 1990, p. 130). Ethics in narrative research will be explored further in the chapter on methodology.

1.3 Organisation of Chapters

In this chapter I have set the context for my research including a brief summary of the higher education landscape in the Republic of Ireland. I have set out the focus of the research, especially my personal motivations for choosing to do this study, before then presenting my research aim and associated research questions. Chapter Two will identify and discuss the scholarly literature in three particular areas which I have identified as relevant to this study and they are: the literature pertaining to the idea of the professional worker within higher education; and closely related, the literature surrounding the area of identity within higher education; and thirdly, the literature surrounding the professional doctorate. Chapter Three will outline my research design including the theoretical perspective and epistemological stance behind my approach to the research, followed by an exploration of narrative research, associated methods of data collection and ethics as they apply to a narrative inquiry. Chapter Four, which has been divided into two parts, will present an evaluation and interpretation of the findings from this narrative study. Part One will make visible different aspects of individual experience by presenting a series of re-storied narratives from each of the research participants using their own words as illustration. Part Two presents a discussion of emergent threads and themes (commonalities) and also some differences in the experiences of the participants. Chapter Five will conclude with some recommendations for action and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review
"'*Google' is not a synonym for 'research'*".
(Dan Brown, 2009)

2. Introduction

In the literature review, there is often a delicate balance between understanding and being open to what the relevant literature is saying about the field of study while also being cognisant of one's own identity and assumptions and what they might bring to the study (Butler-Kisber, 2010). In order to provide some boundaries to this project I will outline the subject areas which I have chosen to examine for this literature review and then attempt to critically and conceptually analyse what others have said and the contributions they have made to this research area. I have identified four main areas which I believe are pertinent to the research questions and they are: the literature pertaining to the idea of *the professional worker* within higher education; and closely related, the literature surrounding *the area of identity within higher education*; thirdly, the literature surrounding the *professional doctorate;* and finally the literature around the area of *student motivation* in doctoral education.

2.1 All changed, changed utterly!

2.1.1. *Changing times in higher education*

References to the major transition in higher education in Ireland and beyond within the past few decades are impossible to miss in the current literature. For many of those working in higher education today it has become a world of "supercomplexity" and "rapid change" (Barnett, 2000). For others these changes "are a fundamental shift in its character" which "are altering the relationship between higher education and state and society and have 'implications for the careers, motivations, and morale of

staff in universities" (Gordon and Whitchurch, 2010, p. 15). Furthermore, as Barnett and Di Napoli (2008, p. 5) posit, amid all these changes, the "spaces for academic identities actually widened and new kinds of academic identity emerged". It is not, however, just the academic staff in these institutions whose identity has been disrupted and I will examine this in more detail further on, but firstly, I will attempt to provide a brief context to the changing nature of higher education and how this has impacted on the professional working within higher education.

In many European countries governments have been enabling their HEIs to become more autonomous with the expectation that the institutions will become more flexible and responsive to external demands and challenges (Kehm, 2012). In addition external stakeholders have been engaged in a process known as governance whereby state control is weakened to allow a variety of actors involvement in strategic decision making (Kehm, 2012). As Kehm (2012, p. 1) notes "the reforms have frequently been described as developing higher education institutions from being an institution to becoming an organisation" and she suggests that this organisational autonomy "entails an expectation that institutional leadership should become more professional". However Deem et al. (2007) view these changes as expressions of "new managerialism" in higher education where universities have been held more accountable to the external environment and where social relations and academic work within universities have been more strongly regulated with managerialist emphases. They argue further that this growing corporate environment has coincided with the gradual privatization of the sector and this can be evidenced by the decline in public expenditure for higher education and the increasing financial contributions made by students, in Ireland as in the UK (ibid, 2007). Overall, there has been a

repositioning of universities within wider social and economic life and with this repositioning has come an expectation, from students, policymakers and employers, that universities will coordinate their activities to "suit new national economic imperatives" and meet a wide range of demands to remain responsive to changing social and economic demands (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 175). Tighter governance of higher educational institutions has meant a shift from the relative freedom, privileges and status that institutions and academic faculty previously experienced with a new set of agendas challenging the legitimacy of the traditional university "value systems and modes of being that traditionally enabled universities to operate as distinct social systems" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 184). Indeed, as a consequence of a changing political attitude and an economic repositioning, the stability and relative autonomy which universities enjoyed has now become subject to much greater scrutiny and accountability from central governments with an added pressure "to pursue research and teaching activities that will potentially be of wider economic value" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 176).

The shift from elite to mass higher education has also contributed to a changing relationship between higher education and society (Trow, 2010). In the UK, this challenge to the university as an ivory tower with its main aim "the pursuit of knowledge" for its own sake began with the new Thatcher government in the 1980s and with successive governments where the focus was on public accountability and a "thrust towards making universities sites for the production of practical, professional knowledge with immediate applicability in the 'real' world'" (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008, p. 4). As Tomlinson (2013, p. 180) posits "production and exploitation of knowledge" has been the key driver to mass higher education in most advanced

political economies. Pressure from newer professions and other occupational groups with aspirations for recognition and status have contributed to "new defining communities" within higher education and thus the enlargement and diversification of academic faculty (Henkel, 2010, p. 4). Henkel argues that some of these professionals came with strong cultures of their own, others had a background in areas "where knowledge was less codified and its validity more contested" leading to "a less exceptional and less cohesive group" of academics (Henkel, 2010, p. 4).

All of these transformations have had significant implications for academic faculty but as Henkel (2010, p. 3) observes, they are only "one dimension of the changes that have occurred in the workforces of higher education institutions". Many other changes, including innovations in technology, growth of the knowledge economy, the growth of quality enhancement systems, etcetera have all contributed to new roles and identities emerging in higher education globally. These changes to the "organisational fabric of higher education and institutions" along with the emergence of the "knowledge society" have accelerated the pace of change to the academic profession which has led to the development of "new forms of professionalism" and "new forms of division of work and cooperation between the academic profession and other professionals in higher education" (Kehm and Teichler 2012, p. 1). Whitchurch (2008) refers to these professionals as "third space" while Kehm (2012, p. 1) contends that these higher education professionals (HEPROs) are not involved primarily in teaching and research but are there to support management in the processes of organisational change including any decision making activities, establish services and "actively shape the core activities of the organisation" in roles which may not previously have existed within the organisational structure. Macfarlane (2010, p. 59)

for example has described this phenomenon as the "morphing of academic practice" which he argues has led to "the 'up-skilling' of professional support staff and the 'deskilling' of academic staff".

These fundamental changes to the character of higher education have profoundly altered what it means to be an academic in the university today. A cursory glance at the literature will show a global higher education community engaged in discussion about this shifting environment and its particular impact on and implications for "academic faculty, the academic profession, academic careers, academic practices, and academic identities" (Henkel, 2010, p. 3). The past decade in particular has seen a renewed interest in the sociology of occupations and professions, but little of the focus has centred on other occupational groups within higher education. So while considerable attention has been paid to the implications of a changing environment for academic identities less attention has been paid to the impact of a shifting environment on other professional staff within higher education (Henkel, 2000; Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008). Certain aspects of academic practice and indeed staff in less mainstream professional or occupational roles particularly those which relate to service, remain poorly documented and under-theorised (Macfarlane, 2005) and yet Clegg (2008, p. 331) argues that "these aspects of academic life are important both positively and negatively in under- standing the cultural contexts of the experiential".

This literature review will attempt to redress the balance by examining the literature surrounding the "invisible professionals" working in higher education (Rhoades, 2010). Before considering the literature around those struggling to establish their professional identities within a higher education context, this literature review will

now critically examine the concept of identity as a recurring theme in the discussion of education and work as it "relates significantly to individuals' interactions with, and relationships to, broader social structures and institutions, and how they make sense of the world" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 4). It will be important to look at the wider literature around academic identity and also that of the professional life within higher education as it speaks to this literature review.

2.2 Identity concepts and theories

2.2.1. *Identity introduced*

The question of identity or self, and the attempt to capture and summarise the relationship between an individual and society lies at the heart of the social sciences with many social scientists from various disciplines engaging in debate and argument in an attempt to explain this conundrum. To understand what constitutes a person's identity is not an easy task especially given the multiple ways it can be approached and explained. Do individuals have "a core, fixed uniqueness which is identifiable or are they a socially constructed performer conforming to social roles?" (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 5) Above all, as individuals to what extent are we free to change our social identity or is it bounded in social arrangements and structures? As Anderson and Williams (2001, p. 5) posit further, "to what extent do social structures determine aspects of social identity? What possibilities exist for individual and collective identities to influence the social structures in which they are embedded?" Indeed what is the balance between "self and structure, structure and agency?" (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 5) According to Jawitz (2009, p. 243) "identity is built around social engagement and is constantly being renegotiated as individuals move through different forms of participation". In this instance then it would seem

that identity is not given but socially constructed. Certainly for MacIntyre (1981, p. 203) "all attempts to elucidate the notion of personal identity independently of and in isolation from the notions of narrative, intelligibility and accountability are bound to fail". So it would seem that while there may not be agreement on how identity is formed there may be some agreement that "identities play a significant role in grounding people's social experiences and their relationships to the social and economic world" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 5).

More simply, it would seem that the identity of individual agents cannot be formed without taking into account their specific context and traditions such as family life, culture and community. This communitarian concept claims then that individuals are both distinctive and embedded and for Taylor (1989) the "defining community" functions as a moral space and additionally provides the language in which individuals make sense of and interpret their world. The formation of identity would appear to be a universal experience and fundamental resource for individuals seeking out meaning from their own experiences and relating this to how they are connected in an existential sense to the world. This is reflected in Castells' (1997, p. 6) definition of identity as "people's source of meaning and experience". Furthermore, the sense of self that people have is often strongly informed by the perceptions of others so:

> the task of producing, projecting and maintaining a credible social identity is an important facet of our relationship to the social world. As such, we undertake significant 'identity work' in finding ways to achieve personal and social affirmation.
>
> (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 5)

Identities though are not nebulous, instead they tend to "transport deeply held values", ground our understanding of our place in the world and guide our actions (Tomlinson,

2013, p. 7). As Archer (2007) attests, the reflexive self is an active, agency seeking subject who seeks some control over their place in the world.

To better understand how the idea of identity came about in a Western sense, it is useful to look at the work of Donald Hall (2004, p. 3) who suggests that "one's identity can be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in the short- or long-term ways, gives one a consistent personality and mode of social being". He claims there are four stages in the historical development of identity and Taylor has summarised these below to show that identities are either:

- taken on through shared practices that demonstrate faithful acceptance of given truths;
- constructed through individual thought and reflection based on doubt and scepticism, rather than uncontested dogma and tradition;
- co-constructions, with an individual's 'traits, beliefs and allegiances' reflecting non-rational processes and commitments;
- continuously under construction in contexts that are characterised by indeterminacy, partiality and complexity.

(Taylor, 2008, p. 29)

Furthermore Taylor (2008, p. 29) claims that a postmodern view would argue that not only are all these positions still viable today especially since "former cultures and paradigms" have an influence on later generations, but an individual, depending on the context, could draw from all of these philosophical positions. While sometimes an individual will faithfully accept certain truths in some contexts especially when these truths are associated with external authority, in other contexts they will actively contest particular dogmas and traditions. Thus "a person's 'identity' is likely to include traits, beliefs and allegiances that are epistemologically inconsistent yet afford particular 'real world' benefits in terms of opportunities and actions that reinforce a sense of self" (Taylor, 2008, p. 29). Identity in this context is fluid and ongoing, formed both by history and the way in which we work and live. Identity then is

important in any discussion about education and work because of "individuals' interactions with and relationships to broader social structures and institutions and, how they make sense of the world" and these experiences will not only be derived from but will also feed into, their sense of self (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 4). It seems logical that conflicts and tensions within a work setting will also contribute to identity construction and this leads us nicely into exploring the notion of identity in a changed higher education environment.

2.2.2. *Exploring the notion of identity in higher education*

Where does this notion of identity then fit into the higher education arena as a specific workplace? As this thesis sets out to examine the lived experiences and motivations of particular individuals working within third level education in Ireland who have chosen to undertake a doctorate in education, it becomes essential to look at some of the voices in the literature debating how identity formation takes place in educational settings and how power is institutionalised and experienced within. Additionally, if we are to understand that "significant aspects of people's identities are socially reproduced through broader cultural experiences relating to class and gender, which, in turn, are strongly mediated through people's formal and informal education" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 203) then it makes sense to assume that the changing relationship between education, state and the economy will have a particularly profound effect upon the goals and values of higher education and subsequently on those working within the higher education arena. Looking at the literature it becomes clear that there is a particular focus on academic identity within higher education. In order to understand how identity has changed and evolved within higher education for professional staff groupings it is important to take account of this literature but also to

firstly consider the theory behind the formation of academic identity and how it has been impacted by changes within the higher education landscape.

For Henkel (2000) the communitarian philosophy of identity can be observed within the formation of academic identities. She explains that occupations and more particularly professions have been "important sources of identity for individuals" and this concept of identity has been central "both in the lives of individual academics and in the workings of the academic profession" (Henkel, 2000, p. 13). A strong academic identity embedded in its defined community is, Henkel (2000) argues, cultivated and rewarded in academic life within the Western world. Furthermore, she agrees with MacIntyre (1981) when she states "communities provide the history, the myths, the very language, concepts and values through which identities are shaped and reinforced" (Henkel, 2000, p. 138). So while "your identity is essentially tied up with what you are committed to, what overwhelmingly you value and what you strive for" (Henkel, 2000, p. 15) it is also shaped by the way individuals exercise their agency, by making choices and by entering into dialogue with other community members (Henkel, 2002). Contributors to the debate on identity tend to differ on the weight they place on structure or agency "on the material conditions in which we live and the extent to which these shape our identities or on our ability to transcend these, to be different" (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 5-6). Taking this into consideration, this literature review will now look more closely at two of the main theories behind the formation of identity especially in higher education.

2.2.3. *A materialist / stucturalist theory of identity*

An earlier way of thinking about the formation of identity is conveyed through that of the materialist / structuralist approach which highlights how structures, particularly economic structures, the formation of capital, the control and nature of labour and the interlinking of economic, political and ideological power, influence individual identities (Anderson and Williams, 2001). This approach contends that the hierarchies of social class, gender and race are institutionalised, and as a result particular elite groups maintain the power and perpetuate the system by legitimating the structures of wealth and power and thereby the individual's position within those structures (Anderson and Williams, 2001). This approach stresses that "forms of oppression" are a consequence of this position and that "forms of consciousness" (the identities) stem from and are embedded within it, even though they may challenge this status quo (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 6). Additionally there is a suggestion that this approach casts the social actor in a subjective role with the institution acting as "state nobility" and shaping the identity of the individual (Delanty, 2008). Theorists such as Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1984) have been advocates of the structuration approach and have emphasised the importance of both agency and structure to the formation of identity. Agency is defined by Tomlinson (2013, p. 6) as "people's capacity and propensity for action and their scope for acting upon the world and producing outcomes". Indeed, Bourdieu has clarified the notions of capital for the higher education context by linking economic capital with culture capital (a non-financial asset but one which carries a knowledge of how society operates for your own advantage) and educational capital (achievement in the best schools or universities either through purchase or ability) (Anderson and Williams, 2001). Bourdieu's (1988) ideas and concepts are defined thus:

the capital invested with value in the field of higher education is a type of cultural capital and consists of two types, namely 'academic capital' and 'scientific capital'. 'Academic capital' is linked to power over the instruments of reproduction of the university body such as attaining senior managerial and teaching positions, while 'scientific capital' is linked to the creation of knowledge and includes scientific authority or intellectual renown.

(Naidoo, 2005, p. 29)

For Delanty (2008) higher education is best understood in terms of a process as opposed to a fixed structure and he argues that while the institution does shape academic identity, academic identities are also able to shape institutions. Furthermore he suggests that "agency is one side of the coin whose other face is the institutional organization of roles and rules" with academic identities in particular resulting from a creative engagement with these institutional rules (Delanty, 2008, p. 133). These particular views sit more easily with a postmodern approach which will now be considered.

2.2.4 A postmodern/poststructuralist theory of identity

On the other side of the debate are the theorists from a postmodern and post-structural perspective who argue that the individual is not without power and indeed is in a position to challenge societal structures. Interestingly postmodernism rejects the idea that there is a universal subject whose identity is fixed and unchanging and argues instead that identities are "fluid, fractured and multiple" (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 7). Anderson and Williams (2001, p. 7) illustrate this by using the term "student" as an example of an identity construct to explain that this is a totalising category which hides the fact that there are a "complexity of differences experienced by those so labelled". They argue that a "typical" student does not exist because there are always differences in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, etc. so if there is no unified subject there can be no "truth" or grand theory about the student experience.

Poststructuralists go further and argue that the subjectivity of actors (their personal understandings of the self) is "constituted through language" and they argue that it is in the arena of language "where forms of social organisation and individual subjectivities are defined and contested. Discourses, using language in particular ways, give reality different meanings" (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 7). For many of the voices writing in this perspective Foucault's (1980) ideas on power and discourses would seem to represent their thoughts, defining discourses as:

> ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern.
>
> (Foucault cited in Weedon, 1987, p. 108)

For Foucault power is fluid and changing within institutions and he claims that discourses are used to justify and perpetuate particular ways of organising activities, especially those activities which are in the political interests of dominant privileged groups who "vie for power"' using the subjectivity of the individual as the battlefield (Anderson and Williams, 2001, p. 7). While discourses can mostly be challenged, at other times it would seem that society endorses certain ways of behaving and the "rightness" of certain assumptions, so to challenge these assumptions becomes difficult (Anderson and Williams, 2001). As Weeks states:

> Each of us lives with a variety of potentially contradictory identities which battle within us for allegiance: as men or women, black or white, straight or gay, able bodied or disabled…The list is potentially infinite.
>
> (Weeks, 1990, p. 88)

For Delanty (2008) modern identity is seen to be in continuous crisis because of the very dichotomy between self-identity and the collective identity of a group. He contends that this is very much the case in higher education because with the democratization of higher education, universities have suffered a major crisis in their

collective identity and do not easily acknowledge the other identity projects that arise.

Henkel (2010) explains it thus:

> [identity] is in a continuous process of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction in the context of multiple and shifting collectivities and relationships. Reflexivity has become central to contemporary understandings of identity.
>
> (Henkel 2010, p. 10)

The idea of establishing a framework for looking at identity is to understand how, when individuals experience change, there has to be a negotiation or challenge to such capital forms. To explore the nature of the debate about identity within higher education, it is important to look at how identity formation and change take place in the higher educational setting where power is institutionalised and experienced. I will now move to discuss the current literature surrounding the transformation of identities for academic staff and how this has impacted on changing identities for professional staff groupings within a higher education context.

2.3 A changing landscape: implications for identities in HE

2.3.1. Transformations in professional identity

The idea of a specialist professional has been around from the middle ages but since then the definition has broadened to include many new professions along the way and has as a result become a contested and ever-changing designation. In the twentieth century commentators sought to differentiate between industry and a profession and defined the measure of the success of a professional as "the service they perform not the gains which they amass" (Crook, 2008, p. 15). Indeed, from the 1930s onwards the term was subject to further analysis with Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933, p. 200) offering that the distinguishing mark of a professional was "an intellectual technique acquired by special training". Further definitions have in many ways reinforced the

plurality of understandings and "the claims to authority that formed the basis of a professional's legitimacy as a professional" have been continually challenged (Barnett, 2008, p. 190). As Crook (2008) posits, there has been a shift from social trust professionalism to expert professionalism and this democratisation of the professions has diminished the intellectual leadership they once provided. For Barnett (2008, p. 190, 206) the professional role is losing clarity, "the ice cracks within professional life" and he argues for the idea of "critical professionalism" suggesting that "the achievement of professionalism lies in discursive creation".

Universities have always had an intimate relationship with the professions, "not only producing 'professionals' but also creating and subjecting to rigorous critique the content of professional knowledge" (Watson, 2008, p. vii). At the beginning of the twentieth century, a profession was defined as a sense of identity for many occupational groups, although not necessarily for academic faculty (Henkel, 2010). The defining community which traditionally commanded their primary loyalty was and continues to be their discipline and "the scholarly community of which they are a part rather than the specific institution in which they work" (Delanty, 2008, p. 124). Becher and Trowler (2001) have previously characterised disciplines as tribes with their own territories, arguing that within that diversity was also rivalry and a strong sense of territory and boundaries. Earlier ideas of academic identity were based on an exceptionalist notion of higher education and were sustained "through various structural and functional divisions in different societies" and "significantly shaped by community histories, values and norms" (Henkel, 2010, p.4-8). Indeed for academics "individual identity and reputation were defining aspirations and values" and they, as the "core" workforce were able to create their "distinct, stable and legitimizing identities" in a "unique, bounded and protected space" (Henkel, 2010, p.4-7). For

many identity theorists in higher education the idea of boundaries and their maintenance has equated with tightly knit communities and indeed as these boundaries have weakened academic faculty have become a less exceptional and less cohesive group (Henkel, 2010). Additionally, with the widening and blurring of these distinct spaces and boundaries has come a sense that higher education is transforming and that people working within these spaces are now having to redefine themselves, their roles and boundaries.

Changing institutional imperatives and a new climate of accountability within higher education have resulted in "new definitions of working or projective spaces" being created along with the emergence of new and diverse models of career progression and trajectories (Henkel, 2010, p. 9). Inevitably academics have perceived change in their work and workplace and have experienced pressure to align their practices to a shifting environment. As they are forced to attune their activities to these changing institutional imperatives they have also had to reconsider their career trajectories and many have chosen new routes to obtain academic capital in order to enhance their position and status within the wider academic community. In some cases academics have exploited the commercial and economic potential of their knowledge production especially with the increasing alignment of universities to the commercial sector (Tomlinson 2013; Henkel, 2000). The traditional notion of academics as independent specialists has therefore been challenged by a more contemporary idea of academics as "fully accountable professionals" (Tomlinson 2013, p. 184). For Tomlinson (2013, p. 185) "the move towards accountability, transparency and efficiency appears to be framing how academics understand and organize their work" and indeed as Brennan et al. (2007) suggest many academics have organised themselves around the key

agendas of "relevance", "output" and "impact", embracing their new roles and identities and being favourably rewarded for "fulfilling new performative imperatives, in terms of research, teaching and other administrative output" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 186). Furthermore, many academics have moved from the traditional role of "scholar" to one which sees them exploit their "academic capitalism" by engaging in more entrepreneurial practices such as exploiting the commercial potential of their knowledge production (Tomlinson, 2013; Slaughter and Lesley, 1997). For these academics there is an understanding that many of these new administrative functions and roles have emerged and are related to the financial survival of our HEIs (Taylor and Underwood, 2015).

Some commentators however have not been so optimistic and have focussed on what they see as an intensification of work for the academic profession and "attendant pressures to fulfil an ever-increasing range of managerially imposed tasks and duties" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 185). For Brennan et al. (2007) higher education has moved from a professional oligarchy to a managerial one and they argue that this has impacted negatively upon the academic profession weakening its influence and economic attractiveness. Indeed, there is a substantial literature which looks at this idea of the academic who feels under scrutiny from managers and who has additional concerns about their value, relevance and legitimacy and some of their arguments will be looked at along with the perceived binary divide between academics and administrators a little further on (Brennan et al., 2007; Deem et al., 2007). Indeed as academics take on more hybrid roles as managers with roles encompassing traditional academic activities and administrative ones this has had an impact for other professional groups working within higher education.

2.3.2. *A new space is created while perceptions of difference remain*

Taylor (1997) has referred to the three tribes of university staff - academics, managers and general/support staff while Whitchurch (2012) defines activity in higher education as belonging to the three broad categories of teaching, research and either service, administration or knowledge transfer. While some see a gradual blurring of the boundaries between academic staff and other professional or occupational groups working together in academic institutions others note that there are exclusionary issues where both academic and professional groupings of staff see the other as more powerful and their own group as more marginalised (Henkel, 2000; Whitchurch, 2012). These binary perceptions have persisted and further distinctions between the concepts of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge as defined by Gibbons et al. (1994) where Mode 1 refers to pure disciplinary knowledge and Mode 2 applied knowledge relating to real world problems and professional practice, adds a further dimension, especially in terms of Mode 2 knowledge production where producers, users and brokers of that knowledge "mingle promiscuously" (Scott, 1997, p. 2). Staff traditionally not associated with any of the above categories, have tended to be described as non-academic (Whitchurch, 2012). Adding to this sense of difference is the idea that management goals and activities are functional whereas academic activity represents freedom and autonomy.

The world is different now and most universities are larger than they were in the so called golden era of academia (Taylor and Underwood, 2005). The range of administrative functions has also grown in response to external pressures such as quality assurance, health and safety and the growing expectations and requirements of students especially in areas of learning support. With staff working in specialist roles

the idea of the university administrator is now "too broad to be meaningful. The worlds of managers and administrators, of central administrators and administrators in academic departments are sharply differentiated", indeed "administrators are no longer a job lot" (ibid, 2015). As Whitchurch (2010, p. 168) contends, increasingly staff without academic contracts but in common with academic faculty often have their own loyalties to their "professional associations, bodies of knowledge, and literatures" and contribute to teaching and learning, research spin-out and other quasi-academic institutional projects such as widening participation and outreach. Additionally she has noted that these professionals are likely to have overlapping interests with academic colleagues and are able to provide spaces for academic activity through networks and partnerships (Whitchurch, 2010).

2.3.3. *Third space identity*

Unprecedented changes in the structural organisation of higher education have contributed to the dislocation of academic identity and this in turn has led to less clear delineation between academic and non-academic roles (Whitchurch, 2012). As new institutional functions have been created, existing boundaries have become blurred and this has led to space opening up between existing professional and academic spheres, leading to what some commentators have perceived as the "messy realities" of higher education roles and identities (Malcolm and Zukas, 2009). Whitchurch (2012) refers to the emergence of a multifaceted identity which now occupies a "third space" and explains how in this space "the concept of administrative service has become reoriented towards one of partnership with academic colleagues and the multiple constituencies with whom institutions interact" (Whitchurch, 2008a, p. 1). Within these partnerships a sort of "blended role" appears which comprises elements

of traditional academic and professional activity. This space requires contributions from a range of staff to create communities of practice occupied by both "unbounded" and "blended" professionals. In this instance unbounded professionals are identified as those individuals who use institutional-wide projects and development opportunities to cross the conventional boundaries between academia and administration and management (Whitchurch, 2010). Certain groups within higher education who participated in research carried out by Whitchurch (2013) have tended to identify with this concept of third space including teaching and learning professionals, research managers, learning technologists and staff in academic practice, library and information systems. Increasingly this group, while classified as non-academic for employment purposes, have a mix of academic and professional credentials, experiences and roles. As Whitchurch (2013, p. 80) acknowledges, "being a *Third Space* professional is likely to be influenced partly by an individual's approach to the settings in which they find themselves, and partly by the nature of those settings". It seems unlikely that a collective identity exists for this group who consider themselves to be working within a third space.

Other terms and identities have been attributed to this group in the literature. Clark (1998) for example, has identified these emerging professionals as part of the "developmental periphery" while Henkel (2010, p. 10) refers to "interstitial spaces, shared and contested with other professional staff" where "the authority of academic knowledge is no longer taken for granted, even in what are still the core activities of education and research". Rhoades (2010, p. 41) agrees that this third space is politically and professionally contested and that this group are "neither academic faculty nor senior administrators, they are a category of professional employee with

advanced degrees who lack the professional perquisites of professors and the positional power of senior administrators" and yet he also acknowledges that "their identities in many ways take on the trappings of professors in that many such professions have worked to develop technical bodies of knowledge, presented in professional conferences and published in academic journals".

I have referred previously to Kehm's (2012) use of the term "higher education professionals" or HEPROs to refer to the growth in numbers of these new groups of mostly highly qualified professionals entrusted to establish services, actively shape the core activities of the organisation and support organisational change and management decision-making processes. Kehm (2012) argues that HEPROs represent emergent expertise and notes that they have "a self-understanding as being generalists and experts rather than specialists and academics". Drawing on data from a wider German study by Kehm and Teichler (2012) she goes on to claim that the more managed an institution becomes the more HEPROS will be employed and their position "creates new configurations of power within the institutions" (Kehm, 2012, p. 3-4). The growing complexity of universities with increased responsibilities for both university leadership and faculty management, has led Schneijderberg and Merkator (2013, p. 53) to argue that some actors in the university do not have the necessary competences or updated information to perform these roles and functions unlike the highly qualified and expert HEPROs who "have a high degree of familiarity with the core functions of higher education institutions". Unlike Whitchurch's (2012) assertion that this emerging group who are neither academic nor strictly administrative occupy an independent sphere outside of academic space, this idea of the HEPRO with a focus on tasks and functions would seem to challenge the

idea of a static group where an administrative academic divide exits. Klumpp and Teichler (2008, p. 169-171) argue instead that the HEPROs have a systematic knowledge about the university which is essential for university management and which releases academic and administrative staff from a variety of functions and tasks.

For Rhoades (2010, p. 41) this concept of managerial professionals is linked specifically to the rise of academic capitalism and he argues that this space is "politically and professionally contested, revealing a growing shift in the balance between managerial discretion and professorial autonomy". Others believe that these new specialists "expect parity of status as professionals in their own right" and "compete with academics for status and authority" (McInnis, 2010, p. 148). Furthermore, it is argued that these new professionals depend heavily on engaging faculty in collaborative initiatives and yet for faculty the very nature of these new initiatives are adding to the already fragmented nature of their work, with some commentators referring to a loss of control on the part of academics who take part in such joint endeavours (McInnis, 2010; Kogan and Teichler, 2007). Macfarlane (2011) has asserted the academic all-rounder is disappearing and instead the para-academic, a result of the up-skilling of professional support staff and de-skilling of the academic, is on the rise. However, as Kelm and Teichler (2012, p. 4) ask "does the emergence of this group constitute yet another dimension in the process of de-professionalisation of academics or is it the other way round?" They suggest that both groups can experience "a thrust towards further professionalization" by cooperating with each other and finding new forms of division of labour (Kehm and Teichler, 2012, p. 4).

What is apparent is that fixed conceptions about identities and careers in higher education are difficult to sustain and that the principle of academic collegiality is not necessarily extended to professional staff within HEIs. Archer (2005, p. 5) for example has reported "a highly resilient anti-management culture" while others have noted that staff structures in some countries can be a site of power especially for non-academic administrators (Kehm, 2012). These competing ideas about the role of professional staff within higher education can "set up tensions that provide an edge to day to day working relationships" and evolve primarily from a problem of definition and understanding coupled with "the way that professional staff are perceived in relation to academic faculty" (Whitchurch, 2010, p. 172).

As Whitchurch (2010) has highlighted, with the diversification of new professional roles within higher education there has also been convergence between functions and different spheres of activity. A broad range of different activities are associated with similar roles in different institutions and this too has had an impact on professional identity and working practices. In some institutions for example these roles may be seen as service or support and therefore somehow subservient sustaining a traditional view of an "academic civil service" and fuelling claims that such staff are invisible (Szekeres, 2011; Whitchurch, 2010). At the other extreme, professional staff and their roles have been linked to the idea of a managed university where there has been a transfer of power to "managerial professionals" (Rhoades, 2010). Additionally they have been linked to the rise of academic capitalism, the generation of institutional income and a consequent "de-professionalization" of academic faculty (Whitchurch, 2010; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). There is an argument that academics will focus their efforts for development only on those roles which are most prominent in the

university such as the professor and the graduate student. However, McAlpine (2008, p.116-118) acknowledges that the consequences of the shift in academia towards corporatism and managerialism bear not only on academic staff but also on the "staff with whom we concurrently construct our experiences" but "whose voices are rarely heard in the discourses of our disciplines". These rarely heard voices include those of academic developers, administrators, librarians, deans, housing officers and career officers, etcetera. Taylor (2008) has commented that there is no such thing as a "standard academic career" and similarly there are a variety and intersection of voices all working within the academic community whose experiences have also been shaped by corporatism and managerialism.

Many scholars have commented on the complexity of the relationships between different staff groupings in higher education. Discussions about the changing policy and socio-economic context which has affected universities have tended to focus primarily on the roles and identities of teaching staff but if we look further in the literature we see evidence that these changes have impacted considerably on the overall identities of universities including professional staff (Tomlinson, 2013). The past decade in particular has seen a renewed interest in the sociology of occupations and professions, but little of the focus has centred on other occupational groups within higher education. As some have observed, there is a dearth of research on non-teaching occupations generally and administrative staff specifically (Collinson, 2006). As McInnis (1998) has made clear this lack of systematic research can in some way be attributed to a general perception that administrators are often regarded as the "poor relations within academia". Meanwhile Rhoades (2010, p. 40-41) believes that "in the eyes of most faculty and academic administrators, the only real professionals

on campus are professors" and indeed goes further to claim that these other employees on campus with degrees "are invisible. It is not that they are seen and yet are unheard. Rather, it is that they are unrecognized and unacknowledged". Some critics have made clear that this chasm can affect contractual and remuneration packages, participation in university decision-making and indeed even access to catering facilities (Brennan et al. 2007, p. 164).

2.3.3. *The way ahead?*

These are interesting times for both the academic profession and other professional groups within higher education. Changes to academic and professional identities are complex, varied and contested. As Gordon (2010, p. 31) asks "is the university a place where all talents are respected, with all roles valued for what they add to the achievement of the reputation and success of the institution?" Words like community, collaboration, cooperation, relationships, and team-working practices are terms which appear again and again in the literature and Whitchurch (2010) allows that it is the "people dimension" which will sustain strong institutions in the future. Relationships constructed between senior management teams, managers and colleagues working together in cross-institutional groups "will continue to be of paramount importance if institutions are to survive and prosper in current environments" (Whitchurch, 2010, p. xvii). Henkel (2010, p. 7) has argued that the story of transformation in higher education "fundamentally signals the need for, and emergence of, new concepts, theories and frameworks for understanding professional or occupational identities in higher education".

It seems clear that regardless of how this space and the people that work within it are labelled, this story, as Henkel (2010, p. 7) so aptly terms it, is one of the diversification and enlargement of the academic profession and "one which discredits the idea that academic faculty should be the exclusive focus of studies of identities in higher education". With the blurring of boundaries and loosening of roles between functions and categories of staff, "workforce identities are no longer defined exclusively in terms of academic identities" (Henkel, 2010, p. 10). Previously "silent" voices within higher education have been given more "voice and space in redefining, along with academics, the nature, aims and scope of higher education" and have used their influence to contribute positively to the life of the university (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008, p. 5). As pointed out by an interviewee in research done by Whitchurch (2013) professional staff are not interested in taking over academic decision making responsibilities or roles but are interested in having a voice and adding value to reinforce academic agendas. As Whitchurch (2013, p. 140) asserts this added value is likely to incorporate practical solutions but may also include "thinking outside the box, developing social and professional capital, taking the part of others, interpreting and translating between interest groups, and generally extending institutional intelligence". This extension of mainstream activities in third level institutions is creating more space for these individuals with mixed backgrounds to inhabit and there is evidence also that increasing numbers of these professionals have not only the experience to qualify for senior academic management positions but also hold doctoral qualifications.

There have been some dissenting opinions about how the professional doctorate has impacted the higher education workplace with Scott and Morrison (2010, p. 15) for

example arguing that "third generation" doctorates were designed to disrupt working practices and learning structures within the academy. They argue further that the rise of the professional doctorate reflects pressure on providers to modify the doctoral experience because of a growing interest from governments in doctoral degrees (ibid, 2010). Traditionally the PhD's role was to provide a highly specialised academic identity for "novitiate academics whose discourse-community is predominantly the academic community" but with the emergence and success of the professional doctorates, boundaries between the two doctorates are being eroded leading to fragmentation and variation in doctoral identities (Scott and Morrison, 2010, p. 16). Those doctorates which combine professional and academic elements make doctoral identity even more complex and while there may well be common elements of doctoral experience, Scott and Morrison (2010, p. 26) posit that different forms of doctoral identity may be created with students on the journey from "competent professional, to novice doctoral initiate" compartmentalising their separate identities of 'academic' and 'professional' and carrying their doctoral status "as a badge of esteem rather than a signifier of identity in the workplace".

This literature review will now move to examine more closely some of those areas introduced above including the background to the professional doctorate and the literature pertaining to the emergence of the doctorate in education.

2.4 The Professional Doctorate

2.4.1. Origins of the Doctorate

According to Boud and Lee (2009, p. 2) the modern doctorate is the "highest formal educational qualification awarded by universities" representing the "pinnacle of

scholarship" (Gilbert, 2004) and commonly referred to as a research doctorate or PhD a fact which distinguishes it from older forms of doctoral award going back to medieval times (Boud and Lee, 2009). The research doctorate came into being in the early nineteenth century in Europe and its arrival is connected to the shift to the discipline as the base for producing research-orientated, universal knowledge. It was later adopted by the US in the mid-nineteenth century, Britain in 1917 and Australia in 1948 (Boud and Lee, 2009) developing considerable variation between different disciplines and national systems. Traditionally academics entered the academic world with a preordained identity based on their usually discipline specific expertise and commitment to the pursuit of knowledge (Delanty, 2008). Intended to be the essential training ground for academic researchers or "stewards of the discipline" it licensed scholars to profess a discipline, replenished communities of scholars within universities and advanced disciplinary knowledge production (Golde and Walker, 2006). In the twentieth century it came to be the principle mark of such academic "voice" (Delanty, 2008, p. 125).

2.4.2. The advance of the professional doctorate

Over the past two decades the number of doctoral graduates has increased along with the number of new disciplines and interdisciplinary specialisations where doctoral research is being carried out (Boud and Lee, 2009). This increasing diversity of doctoral education is often attributed to "the changing social, political and economic landscape, perhaps best captured in the notion of the 'knowledge economy' and its reconfiguration of our understanding of knowledge production and what constitutes legitimate knowledge" (Boud and Tennant, 2006, p. 294). Certainly what was once "frequently regarded as a cottage industry, a prestigious yet somehow fringe activity

in higher education" and the "domain of an elite few" has since become "a professional qualification across a wide range of high-order intellectual, professional and work domains" (Green and Powell, 2005, p. 5; Boud and Lee, 2009, p. 3).

Although a feature of the American higher education system since the 1920s, professional doctorates were only introduced to the UK in 1992. They arrived in Australia and New Zealand around the same period. By the end of that decade they had enjoyed a rapid expansion and while there is evidence that the professional doctorate originated in the older research-led universities, their growth has continued in every sector of the UK higher education system (Taylor, 2008). As Taylor (2008) posits professional doctorates have become a significant new force in doctoral education and have contributed to the overall growth in the number of doctoral students. He points to surveys undertaken by the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) which report an approximate increase of twenty per cent in the number of professional doctorate programmes in the 1990s, a figure considered to be underestimated because of non-returns by some universities. The UKCGE surveys also reveal a disciplinary spread from areas such as education, clinical psychology, medicine, business administration, and engineering.

Within the doctoral family there is considerable variation on offer ranging from the traditional PhD option to professional doctorates, practice based doctorates, taught doctorates and new route PhDs all of which offer taught courses and assessments (Park, 2007). These "third generation" (Stephenson et al., 1006) doctorates are commonly profession-specific and, according to Boud and Lee (2009, p. 3) are aimed specifically at mid-career professionals.

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This growing interest in the field of doctoral education has led to critical appraisal of the more traditional PhD and questions being asked about how the doctorate can more effectively be put to work (Boud and Tennant, 2006). Furthermore, within the literature there are many competing explanations offered for the rapid expansion of the professional doctorate. Some commentators have agreed that offering a new doctoral model instead of changing existing programmes is more beneficial for the university in that it creates new business and a new basis for competitiveness (Servage, 2009; Lester, 2004). Neumann (2005, p. 174) concurs with this view and states "professional doctorates are seen by policy makers and advisers as a means of attracting fee income and adding 'relevance' to doctoral research training". She goes further to contend that in Australia, "in terms of the differentiation between PhDs and professional doctorates, it could be argued that professional doctorates were no more than an expedient federal government policy of the 1990s which lacked a strong educational rationale" (Neumann, 2005, p. 185).

Neumann (2005, p. 1744) suggests that in the UK the growth is because of "government concern to meet the needs of career professionals outside academia at doctoral level" while Bourner et al (2001, p. 79) link the growth of professional doctorates to the growth of mass higher education. Usher (2002) argues that doctoral education is necessary to support innovation and economic development while Boud and Tennant (2006) draw attention to the impact of the knowledge economy on doctoral education. They define four main areas of consideration: the strong policy emphasis on the link between research, innovation and economic performance with universities acting as agents of economic growth and focussing on identifiable research outcomes from both academics and students; the role of the universities in

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producing creative, innovative, flexible etc. workers for the new knowledge economy; links between workplaces and universities being fostered at all levels of studies; and the production and distribution of knowledge no longer being seen as the exclusive preserve of the universities, instead a growing recognition that knowledge can be produced in workplace contexts (Boud and Tennant, 2006, p. 294-5). Additionally they cite the new route PhD in particular as "specifically designed to meet the demands of the knowledge economy" while operating within the traditional PhD formula and they further assert that it is this which is "driving both new forms of provision and new and innovative ways of engaging with existing forms of provision" (Boud and Tennant, 2006, p. 298).

From the perspective of students, this range of doctorates has offered more choice and opportunity, especially for those studying through distance or part-time. Indeed, in the UK most people who pursue a professional doctorate are already employed in a professional career. Kehm (2009) asserts that in Britain a clearly defined distinction exists between a research doctorate and a professional doctorate leading to the latter often being downgraded to a second class doctorate within academic circles. She adds that the professional doctorate is "somewhat less demanding as regards the requirement of producing an original piece of research" and consequently "the research work carried out for the dissertation is seen less as a contribution to the knowledge base of a discipline than as a contribution to the development of fields of professional practice" (Kehm, 2009, p. 201; Kehm, 2009a, p. 160). Certainly doctoral education is currently a topic of great interest with scholars and some of the more problematic issues include "quality, funding, duration and successful completion as well as appropriate skills and competences for professional research careers inside and

outside academia" (Kehm, 2009, p. 198). The phenomenal growth of less traditional forms of doctoral education has not been without its detractors. Taylor (2008, p. 71) believes that for some in higher education any form of doctorate other than a PhD "is, at best, an inferior award, and, at worst, jeopardises the whole meaning and understanding of a doctorate". I will look at these differing views shortly but first it is important to give a brief context to the emergence of the professional doctorate in education.

2.4.3. *The education doctorate*

The first professional doctorate in education (EdD) was introduced in the UK at the University of Bristol in 1992 and was developed as a response "to a need of education professionals for a higher form of professional development" (Scott et al., 2004, p. 31). The EdD has been described as "a professionally focussed doctorate for education professionals where experienced professionals or practitioners develop research skills, reflect rigorously on their practice and carry out a substantial piece of research" (Scott et al., 2004, p. 31-32). The structure tends to be sequential starting with mandatory taught modules and compulsory assignments leading to a research dissertation stage (Green and Powell, 2005). While initially then there was some resistance to the EdD, their early success coupled with demand ensured their spread. Like other professional doctorates, initially there was some thought that "the EdD was a 'taught' doctorate, and therefore both easier to obtain and of second-class status in comparison with the PhD" although Scott et al. (2004, p. 31) concede that most universities quickly discovered that this was not the case.

The EdD was introduced to Ireland in 2004 and although there was much enthusiasm initially, Loxley and Seery (2012, p.3) suggest that this eagerness has "not been replicated by policy makers at either the national or institutional levels". Instead the focus has been on expansion and change to the PhD to the detriment of the professional doctorate. Furthermore, they believe that professional doctorates have been marginalised from the new agenda for change in research and graduate education in Ireland and they show concern that while there are presently a number of EdDs available within the Irish higher education sector, the lacklustre approach and understanding of professional doctorates by policy makers may well see interest in them fade (Loxley and Seery, 2012).

2.4.4. *Professional doctorate v PhD*

It is difficult to say definitively what differences, if any, there are between the PhD and the professional doctorate because both qualifications have considerable variation not only across institutions and subjects but even within subjects (Bourner et al., 2010). For Boud and Tennant (2006) there is significant overlap between the differing forms of provision but what they believe is important is what they have in common rather than their differences. A cursory glance at the literature on doctoral reform will show much dissent over the issue of the differences between the PhD and the professional and other doctorates. Indeed in some areas the demise of the professional doctorate is already being forecast with the PhD being lauded as the "premier and preferred choice as the doctorate in the professions" (Evans et al., 2004, p. 29). Arguing further Evans et al. (2004, p. 25) suggest that the professional doctorate has fallen short of its expectations and instead "the PhD has quietly strengthened its grip on doctoral education". On the other side of the debate Taylor (2008) attests that both

the PhD and the professional doctorate are basically different routes to the same end, a doctorate awarded for work of equal standard. This assertion that the distinction between the two is entirely in the process to a similar end is prevalent in the literature and the challenge for the professional doctorate is to be able to satisfy both academia and the professions that it *is* the same level as a PhD and is attaining the same advanced level of study. Green and Powell (2005) contend that within the UK there is a danger of a proliferation of nomenclature for this level of doctoral qualification which has issues with regard to national and international recognition and they state:

> The Professional Doctorates need to be seen and treated as research degrees that produce doctoral thinkers and doers, albeit in specified areas of professional practice and by different means. What is common is 'doctorateness' and that is a standard, or an elevation, that is attainable by different routes.
>
> (Green and Powell, 2005, p. 99)

Although professional doctorates have experienced phenomenal growth in the UK questions have still been asked about "the necessity and value of a distinct 'professional' designation at the doctoral level", with some asking for example, if the professional doctorate "swims in the same status 'pool' as the conventional PhD?" (Servage, 2009, p. 768). He later concludes that those students who choose professional doctorates are generally not seeking careers in the university and therefore for them, the "positional value or relative status of the professional doctorate degree is of less importance, both to the holder of the accreditation and to his or her employer" (ibid, 2009, p. 774) Neumann (2005) also suggests that for some students there is a belief that a PhD is the preferable option to a doctorate especially when students are seeking international recognition or mobility in their fields. She maintains that this is a widely held student belief the professional doctorate lacks the "international currency and status of the PhD and is of lesser quality and standard"

(Neumann, 2005, p. 186). The motivation of students pursuing a doctoral qualification is obviously the focus of this study and will be looked at shortly in the context of the literature, but meanwhile this does throw up some interesting questions about the rationale behind offering the professional doctorate as an equivalent but alternate route to a doctoral qualification. Servage (2009) offers the explanation that the professional doctorate is simply a non-rival rather than a positional or rival good and she expands this further:

> if, in the case of the professional doctorate, neither universities nor students regard status as a significant consideration, the supply and demand for professional doctorates is much more likely to assume the dynamics of non-rival consumer product, where the success of the institution becomes dependent strictly upon its ability to market and 'sell' the degree offering as widely as possible.
>
> (Servage, 2009, p.775)

Meanwhile the demand for professional doctorates is strong and seems fuelled by both globalisation and communications technology. For the UK "the increasing use of travel and communication worldwide and the extension of English as a common academic language mean that the UK is a competitor in a global market in a way that was not the case ten years ago" (Green and Powell, 2005, p. 16-17). Interestingly, the revision of doctoral education in the UK has been affiliated with the higher education policies of the OECD who have "been centrally important in articulating and spreading policy talk about the knowledge economy and the role of education, innovation and research to it" and in particular emphasising lifelong learning as a strategy of national competition within this global knowledge economy (Rizvi and Lingard, 2006, p. 252-3). Some countries have developed their own doctoral reform manifestos based on the OECD policies and the assumption that "higher education provides the highly skilled human capital required to 'fuel' a prosperous knowledge-driven economy" and to compete effectively in a global economy (Servage, 2009, p.

770). Servage (2009, p. 765) asserts that while "there are too few academic positions for graduates" on the one hand, on the other "the needs of the knowledge economy have increased the demand for doctoral-level research abilities in governments, research institutes and private industries" and it is this phenomenon of human capital theory which may explain the growing interest in the reform and innovation of doctoral level education.

Doctoral level education is by its nature "intensive and lengthy" and as Servage (2009, p. 766) contends it represents a significant investment by a society with the expectation of considerable returns "by way of enhancing the sponsoring country's position in the race to attract both research and development funding and knowledge-based industry". Although this argument runs throughout the literature there are dissenting voices who claim that the idea that doctoral education is primarily "to train a research workforce to sustain a high-tech economy" is too constraining and limits its possibilities (Boud and Lee, 2009) Yet, the professional doctorate is an attractive proposition for those seeking to pursue a model of doctoral education which allows them to develop their knowledge and work-based practice. As Fenge (2009, p. 4) argues "there appears to be a growing concern amongst government to meet the needs of career professionals outside academia at doctoral level" and the professional doctorate with its emphasis on a connection with practice through the research topic, would seem to be the ideal solution. It seems clear that the reform of graduate education has had economic benefits for the individual as well as to society and while the universities have responded to externally driven demand for doctoral education, there is another source of demand which has not yet been examined and that is the

demand from the students themselves. I will now briefly explore the motivation of students pursuing professional doctorate programmes.

2.5. Considering student motivation

As Wellington and Sikes (2006) among others, have acknowledged, the area of student motivation around doctoral education is one which remains under explored in the literature, and especially in an Irish context. For Lee et al. (2009, p. 284) the lack of dialogue surrounding the future of professional doctorate practice is an issue and they contend that there is an opportunity with emerging generations of graduates to gain student and supervisor experiences which could address issues of the "fit and opportunities" of the professional doctorate. Recent research in Australia carried out by Guerin, Jayatilaka and Ranasinghe (2015, p. 89) also found that while the number of candidates embarking on higher degrees by research around the world was increasing, there was still limited knowledge about why they were choosing this path and indeed there were still "disappointingly low completion rates in many areas".

The work of Scott et al. (2004) has been a notable exception in the area of doctoral motivation and as they explain it their work is not only about practising professionals engaging in the often frustrating and difficult business of completing a higher professional degree at university but essentially is about the dissonance between the two cultures of learning- the workplace and academic cultures - and their attempt to mediate between the two. Their study not only examined why students chose to do a professional doctorate but also investigated the impact of the learning on them as individuals. As Boud and Tennant (2006) note, "the interests and motivations that lead to doctoral study are many and complex" and others argue that human motivation

itself is "complex and messy" (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, p. 724). In spite of this complexity however, and accepting of the variation in and expectations of professional doctorate students across and within programmes, Scott at al. (2004) put forward three broad categories for students' motivations, two of which they based on extrinsic motivators and one on intrinsic motivators. Briefly they define extrinsic motivation as "governed by the goal, values and interests of others as they affect the individual" and intrinsic motivation as the act of doing something for the enjoyment of taking part or for its own sake rather than for a reward (Scott et al., 2004, p. 114). Furthermore they clarify that while they present three models of motivation, these constructs are unlikely to exist in isolation and "elements of all three could conceivably feature to varying degrees within an individual student" (Scott et al., 2004, p. 114). Within the two extrinsic groups were firstly those at the start of their career who saw the qualification in terms of career development and an initiation into a professional life and secondly, more established professionals who regarded the qualification as a continuation and possibly an enhancement to their career. The intrinsically motivated group were more likely to be well established in their career and were pursuing the qualification for reasons of professional credibility and personal fulfilment (Scott at al., 2004; Wellington and Sikes, 2006).

Wellington and Sikes (2006) use Scott et al.'s study and framework to consider and reflect on their own data gleaned from a large study of the motivations and perceptions of education doctorate students and concede that their informants "privileged the personal and the social aspects of taking a professional doctorate" and hence it was difficult to classify motivations as extrinsic or intrinsic. A more recent large survey of 405 students from all faculties in an Australian university who were

embarking on a doctoral qualification was made by Guerin et al. (2015) with the intention of discovering something about their motivations. The study revealed five broad areas of motivation: family and friends, intrinsic motivation, lecturer influence, research experience, and career progression. Additionally Guerin et al. (2015, p. 101) claim that the results of their study, while revealing the complex nature of motivations, provide an understanding of key drivers for doctoral candidates and insight into their decisions to undertake research degrees, "while also providing information for universities' recruitment processes and policies". They contend further that a "good match between motivations for undertaking a doctorate, choices about what type of doctorate, and the likely outcomes must surely be part of a responsible higher education sector" (Guerin et al., 2015, p. 101). They conclude that their study confirmed some of the motivations previously reported in qualitative studies on professional doctorates in specific disciplines.

Other studies of doctoral student motivations from a British perspective include Burgess, Weller and Wellington (2011) and Leonard, Becker and Coate (2005) who have all highlighted evidence of intrinsic and deeply held personal motivations which relate to the identity of the students. While Boud and Tennant (2006, p. 295) believe that "the desire for personal satisfaction and intellectual stimulation and for recognition and acknowledgement by others of unique and sophisticated achievements is a central consideration" for those undertaking a doctorate there are others who are critical of the notion that students have a significant amount of autonomy and personal choice when choosing to do a professional doctorate. Servage (2009) for example, contends that many doctoral students are not so much "choosing" education as surviving in the labour market. Furthermore she argues that while doctoral studies are

undertaken for diverse reasons and at diverse career stages there is an unquestioning assumption that this substantial investment will yield both social and economic dividends (Servage, 2009). Certainly Leonard et al. (2005) found that many of the tensions surrounding the informants in their study who had recently graduated from an education doctorate were centred on its economic usefulness. Other studies drew attention to the multiple roles, responsibilities and outside factors facing contemporary doctoral students, listed by the Commission on the Future of Graduate Education as "family responsibilities, student status, financial concerns, time to completion, and post-completion employment goals and opportunities" (Baker and Pifer, 2015, p. 296). On this point, the work by Burgess et al. (2011) on doctoral identity seems to indicate that the very process of undertaking a professional doctorate and the journey to the final product impacts greatly both on the personal and professional lives of students. It would therefore seem possible that these personal tensions which exist and contribute to the initial decision to undertake a doctorate continue to inform the overall experience and contribute to continuing tensions after completion.

In their study on doctoral motivation Wellington and Sikes (2006, p. 732) felt unable to make generalisations from their data, but stated that "biography is, and always will be, *the* crucial factor affecting perceptions and experiences". Additionally they believe that for students some of the features of the professional doctorate such as "collegiality, support, friendship and social interaction" are of particular value especially when compared with the traditional idea of the solitary and lone PhD scholar (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, p. 732). It will be interesting to see if their assertion that "what has happened to us in the past affects the things that happen to us

in the present, both through the social, cultural, academic and economic capital we possess and are able to draw on, and through the identities we have developed and are attributed to us" will ring true for the participants taking part in this study based within an Irish context (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, p. 732).

2.6. Conclusion

As outlined in the introduction, four areas of literature were critically explored to help contextualise this research study. I will now briefly summarise the main elements of their argument to show their relevance to this study and clarify the need for this research in the context of the discussion.

As all research participants were from a professional but not academic background and working within a higher education context while studying for a doctorate, it seemed imperative to critically analyse those studies which not only told the story of the professional worker within contemporary higher education but also contextualised their situation. Social and economic change and the emergence of the knowledge society have all contributed to seismic changes within higher education altering the fabric of higher education and impacting its institutions and workforces around the world (Kehm and Teichler, 2012). Against this background the chosen literature examined the changing role and identity of those workers considered by some as "invisible" and "unacknowledged" while also exploring some of the challenges facing them in their workplace especially any contributory factors to their doctoral motivations (Rhoades, 2010).

The literature surrounding identity is vast and was a recurring theme in the discussion of education and work. I therefore chose to explore the body of literature surrounding the area of identity specifically those aspects which were relevant to HE professionals. Both structuralist and communitarian ideologies were examined more closely especially the conflict over how much autonomy individual agents have in respect of their own identity and how this was relevant to both academic and other HE professionals. Interestingly, the conversation around identity other than academic in higher education is only beginning and while there are some key writers in this area including Whitchurch, Henkel, Kehm and Rhoades, the area remains underexplored. Other interesting and sometimes contentious aspects of identity were explored in the review and they include: the blurring of boundaries between different staff groups; the notion of third space identity and the HEPRO; and, exclusionary issues such as binary perceptions, labelling, invisibility, managerialism and accountability.

The third area of literature to be critically explored was that of the literature surrounding the origins and development of the modern research doctorate. This literature was used firstly to contextualise the research study and secondly to inform the research findings in relation to the rise of the professional doctorate and why HE professionals chose it over a PhD. The literature reveals that within academia the doctorate represents the pinnacle of scholarship and was traditionally intended to be the training ground for academic researchers or "novitiate academics" (Scott and Morrison, 2010, p. 23). Against this background it seems obvious that the question framing this study should arise, why are so many HE professionals motivated to undertake a doctorate especially when it is not something that they are traditionally required or expected to do?

This question leads then to the fourth and final area of literature explored for this study, and that is the area of student motivation especially doctoral motivation. Surprisingly, while the numbers of students undertaking higher degrees by research are increasing worldwide, this theme remains under-explored in the literature. Some would also argue that doctoral education itself remains under-resourced (Scott and Morrison, 2010). More research into supervisor and student experiences of the doctorate could provide useful information on the fit and purpose of future doctoral offerings especially against a background of traditionally low completion rates, inadequate supervisions and spiralling issues affecting HE as Brexit looms ever closer (and where applications for Irish universities have soared) (Lee et al., 2004). Many of those studies of doctoral motivation identified in the literature review have used various aspects of qualitative research particularly the interview method to reach their findings but none of them had used narrative inquiry or combined it with the life grid method. I thought that the combination of the two could foreground the voice and experiences of participants in a way which would generate rich, descriptive data.

I have identified the four main areas of literature which have clearly fed into and informed this research study and its findings. The next chapter will outline my research design including the theoretical perspective and epistemological stance behind my approach to the research, followed by an exploration of narrative research, associated methods of data collection and ethics as they apply to a narrative inquiry.

Chapter 3: Methodology
"Life must be lived forwards but can only be understood backwards"
(Soren Kierkegaard)

3. Introduction

In the preceding chapter I have introduced the main aim of this research study which is to explore and gain an understanding of why professional staff engaged in academic work, but not employed in an academic context or on academic contracts, within Irish HEIs, have chosen to undertake a doctorate in education (EdD). The reasons why people enrol in doctoral study are varied and complex and there is no doubt that society is enriched by the contributions of those who are engaged in it. However, there are very few of their stories in the higher education literature, especially in an Irish context and yet it seems clear that a study of the lives and experiences of professional staff occupying this space could make a very useful contribution to the literature around identity, student motivation, professional doctorates and professional development.

As asserted by Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) one of our first considerations in situating a study is that of the question or issue that compels us enough to first reflect and then seek to gain an understanding from it. They contend further that "compelling issues that lead to unsettled questions are typically related to our life experiences" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 5). How we experience the world will invariably influence how we think about it. Undoubtedly the "unsettled question" at the heart of this study is one which is directly related to my own life experiences especially those gleaned from both working and studying in a higher education context. Indeed as Sikes and Potts (2008, p. 5) attest, "biographical experiences arising from individual and social

characteristics have (more or less) influence on, and import for, the research interests people have, the methodologies they adopt, [and] the methods they use".

Like all social researchers, I have striven to choose the best approach to investigate the research topic. It should be said however, that there are a considerable number of research approaches to consider when carrying out a study which explores the human experience and this decision is one which should echo and be compatible with the world view and central goals of the researcher. As Crotty (1998) reminds us, research is not just a technical exercise, but is concerned with understanding. To illustrate how I came to choose a qualitative narrative inquiry study, it is important to first consider some of the theory behind qualitative inquiry, and this chapter will now attempt to do that.

3.1 The Research Design

As Crotty (1998, p. 13) illustrates often it is the very focus of our research which "leads us to devise our own ways of proceeding that allow us to achieve our purposes". In other words, it is the unsettled research question we ask and the information we wish to glean from our study which leads us to our choice of methodology. However, if "experience and thought are inextricably linked and individuals experience both life and conscious thought qualitatively" then perhaps it could be argued that the "choice" is not a free one but instead is based on the researcher's worldview and the various aspects which comprise that worldview, including ontology, philosophy, epistemology and theory (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 5; Jones, 2006, p. 3). It seems clear that if, as Jones et al. (2006, p. 8) attest "who we are as people encompasses our beliefs about the nature of reality, truth and

knowledge" then these beliefs will influence the nature of our research and subsequently how we commence our study. Cohen (2000, p. 3) agrees, to claim that "research is concerned with understanding the world and that this is informed by how we view the world(s), what we take understanding to be, and what we see as the purposes of understanding". For Crotty (1998) the four fundamental aspects of any research design are; epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. It is therefore imperative that I give consideration to all these elements.

3.1.1. *A researcher's worldview*

If as Jones et al. (2006, p. 3) attest, "qualitative research is guided and influenced by theory" then it makes sense that the researcher must therefore be aware of and pay attention to the way in which philosophy and theory underpins and guides the research process. Even within the literature however, there are differing views on some fundamental issues surrounding concepts within qualitative research which can be confusing for the researcher. Furthermore, in some of the more contemporary research textbooks there can be a lack of emphasis on the philosophical and theoretical considerations behind research and more of an emphasis on "qualitative" research as an overarching research design. For the purpose of this research the concept of worldview or paradigm or theoretical perspective is one which is related to our upbringing and culture and how we position ourselves in relation to the world. It is consistently referred to as a set of assumptions or "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" and which therefore guides the researcher and the research process (Sikes, 2004, p. 18; Jones et al., 2006). While a worldview can be influenced and shaped by life experiences and may change over time, ultimately, it will be shaped by consistent

values and concepts (Jones et al., 2006) and "represents a distillation of what we think of the world but cannot prove" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 15).

While social science research is concerned with people and their life contexts it is also concerned with "philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge and truth (epistemology), values (axiology), and being (ontology) which underpin human judgements and activities" (Somekh et al., 2011, p. 2). The term epistemology tends to refer to the nature of knowledge or those assumptions made about the acquisition or generation of knowledge, or, put more plainly, how we know what we know. As Dunne et al. (2005, p. 14) suggest, it "refers to the nature of our claims to know things about ourselves and the world and to how we justify those claims". Ontology is a term which is associated with the nature of reality or existence or being – or as Crotty (1998, p. 10) defines it, "what is", and along with epistemology, informs our theoretical perspective. These terms are important to acknowledge and understand because our theoretical perspective will shape and guide our research and act as a lens through which we view the world. Indeed, how we align ourselves with the idea of what knowledge is and how we find the truth will directly influence how we both gather and communicate knowledge to others. As suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 6) to believe that knowledge is "hard, tangible and objective" will show a tendency towards the observer methods of the natural sciences and a positivist position, whereas to "see knowledge as personal, subjective and unique" will illustrate an involvement with those participating in the research and a tendency towards an anti-positivist position.

The question at the heart of this research is not concerned with discovering an objective and universal truth, but instead is seeking to gain some understanding of the nature of the experiences of professional staff, and not academic lecturing staff groups, working in third level Irish education, who have chosen to undertake a doctorate in education. Their experiences will be relayed through narrative in an interview situation and also through the method of life grids which will be examined in more detail as the chapter progresses. The choice of a qualitative study says something about the nature of my personal worldview and epistemological stance so I will attempt to explain this further now.

3.1.2 *A researcher's epistemological stance*

It seems clear that social researchers approach their work from different places and perspectives. At least three main schools of thought or approaches have emerged in relation to the epistemological positioning of researchers and they include objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism. As outlined above by Cohen et al. (2000) the positivist natural scientific position is grounded in the objectivist epistemological stance which is concerned with the idea that there is a universal truth or reality which is physical and observable and not influenced by value – depicting things as they really are. To be objective is to be detached and the objective stance emphasizes this detachment and argues that knowledge can be found independently of judgments. At the other side of the scale and opposed to the objective epistemology is that of subjectivism, a stance which considers the role of values in research to be formative. Subjectivists believe that truth is influenced by society and politics and, according to Crotty (1998, p. 9) is "imported" into the research study. Thus reality is constructed by individuals so the researcher and the research participants are actively

involved (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). As Jones et al. (2006, p. 19) define it subjectivists create meaning through "acting with others and engaging in discourse with them".

The constructivist or constructionist stance stands somewhere in the middle of these views and is concerned with how human beings interact and engage with the world around them. It assumes that all people and therefore all researchers bring with them a lived world view (Jones et al., 2006, p. 18). Simply put, constructionists believe that we engage with the world and the realities around us and construct rather than create our own meaning from that interaction. This research study will place emphasis on the narratives given through interview by a group of professional staff undertaking a doctorate in education and will focus on their stories and experiences. Clearly a constructionist approach fits easily with my research topic and the stated aims of this study. Indeed constructionists argue that objective truth is not waiting to be discovered but rather meaning is gained through interpretation and the aim is to understand aspects of human activity from the perspective of those who experience it. For the purpose of this research the meaning or understanding will be conveyed through the analysis and interpretation of the narratives and life grids gathered from the research participants through interview. As Crotty (1998, p. 8-9) argues "there is no meaning without a mind" because while the world may exist regardless of whether humans are conscious of it, what kind of world is it without engagement or conscious thought? Furthermore, he suggests that different people construct meaning in different ways "even in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). While I will not attempt to make objective, valid and wider generalizations about the nature of the experiences uncovered, it will nonetheless be interesting to see how the participants

have constructed their own meaning in relation to their experiences as professional staff working in an academic environment and pursuing a professional doctorate. What is particularly interesting is the nature of those experiences and how the narratives may differ because as Crotty (1998, p. 64) recognizes "different people may well inhabit quite different worlds". I believe that there is not one "true" way of seeing things therefore the interpretation of the research data will be offered as a plausible and helpful understanding of the experiences of the research participants. I have already referred to the idea of a theoretical perspective underpinning the choice of research design and this will now be looked at in more detail.

3.1.3. *It is all about the theory!*

There is very little consensus in the literature about what constitutes theory or a theoretical framework in qualitative research. Anfara and Mertz (2015, p. 7) have presented what they consider to be three different understandings of what constitutes theory in qualitative research from the literature and they define them thus: firstly the idea that theory has little relationship to qualitative research; secondly that theory in qualitative research relates to the methodology the researcher chooses to use and the epistemologies underlying that methodology, and a further sub-set of that position is that it is related to some methodologies; and thirdly that theory in qualitative research is much broader and more pervasive in its role than methodology. As they explain further these understandings are not mutually exclusive and some scholars may lean towards more than one position.

By choosing narrative inquiry to study the experience of my participants in this research study experience, I have intuitively utilized a "well-suited theoretical framework" (Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 42). Furthermore, aligning the study to a

Deweyan perspective on experience both sharpens distinctions between other forms of narrative analysis and highlights the importance of the "transactional aspect of human thought with our personal, social and material environment" (ibid, p. 39). As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 42) further attest, by studying an individual's experience narrative inquirer's are seeking "ways to enrich and transform that experience for themselves and others". I would therefore agree with the view expressed by Merriam and Associates (2002) that methodology does play a part in the methodological stance that a researcher will adopt but equally theory has a broader and deeper influence on the research process. Moreover Merriam (2009) emphasizes that a theoretical framework is derived from the "orientation or stance that you bring to your study" and influences every aspect of the study. Without this rudimentary framework we would be unable "to think, collect, analyze, describe, or interpret our data" (Anfara and Mertz, 2015, p. 14).

In order to reach the intended destination of this research, I will now look in some detail at the choice of narrative as a methodology and also at the methods chosen to collect data from the participants.

3.2 Methodology

There is no one way to carry out qualitative research, rather it is characterised by the notion of variety and choice in its approaches and methods and indeed, it is this diversity which allows the researcher to choose an approach which works best for their research question. The methodology is often referred to as a strategy or plan which guides procedure and is defined by Crotty (1998, p. 3) as "the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and

linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes" and by Jones et al. (2006, p. 41) as the "rudder for all additional research decisions". In the literature there are many attempts to quantify the number of qualitative approaches available but Creswell (2011) suggests the main five traditions are narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study and grounded theory. It would seem that just as different worldviews influence the selection of theoretical perspectives and research traditions, those theoretical positions and research traditions then influence the selection of research phenomena (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Some phenomena will fit more naturally with a particular qualitative approach illustrating clearly that the choice of question will often inform the choice of methodology. In the case of narrative research, it is common to find that the individual is often the actual phenomena under investigation.

The research question at the heart of this study is concerned with considering, exploring, examining and focusing on the lived experience of certain individual professional staff in third level education institutions in Ireland, who made the choice to undertake a doctorate in education. I will attempt to look more closely at the reasoning and motivation behind their choice of an educational doctorate, particularly any influencing factors and especially those related to their working environment. In addition, I am concerned with gathering data through the collection of their stories, and then attempting to look at the meaning from their individual experiences since narrative research argues that "people create themselves and reality through narrative" (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p. 226). Narrative has a long history both in literary tradition and in the human experience with some voices insisting that "life and narratives are inextricably related" (Gill and Goodson, 2011, p. 158). Narrative and

story are often used interchangeably in social research. As Sikes and Gale (2006) describe it, narratives are everywhere and "human beings are storying creatures" using their stories and constructing their narratives to make sense of and understand their life, experiences and the world. As the scholar Barthes (1977, p. 79) observes, narrative is present in all forms of social life and "is simply there, like life itself". I will now look further at the origins of this approach.

3.2.1. *An introduction to narrative research*

According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013) narrative has been used as an approach to philosophical research for centuries in areas such as religion and the humanities with Dawn (2010) arguing that in Western tradition in particular stories from the bible and from early religious texts have influenced culture including literature and the media. For hermeneutic thinkers there is a belief that human life is interpreted through narrative and that while life is meaningful, the meaning is implicit "and it only becomes explicit in our narrative and stories" (Gill and Goodson, 2011, p. 158).

Obviously there is a long literary tradition of studying the art of the narrative but more recently its application across the social sciences has become more widespread. This contemporary interest in the use of narrative in the social sciences can be traced back several decades to scholars such as Bertaux (1981) and Mishler (1986) who both emphasised the importance of using and listening to stories as a way of providing insight into particular social contexts. Indeed, this association between narrative anthropology and sociology is a long one with Gill and Goodson (2011) crediting the origins of life history research, a tradition closely linked to narrative, to the Chicago School of Sociology in 1930. Furthermore, after the second world war, German

sociologists gathered life history accounts as part of the interpretive biographical method from both Holocaust survivors and Nazi soldiers (Wengraf, 2001). As Gill and Goodson (2011) assert, life history and narrative share a common root in the concept of narrative or stories.

A reading of the literature will illustrate that narrative approaches are now widespread in the social sciences having emerged originally from a variety of fields within the social world including sociology, psychology, anthropology, the humanities and education. As a research methodology it crosses the disciplinary divide and is used by researchers from very diverse backgrounds. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 2) suggest that narrative may have an important place in other disciplines because "it focuses on human experience, perhaps because it is a fundamental structure of human experience, and perhaps because it has a holistic quality". Scholars such as John Dewey and Jerome Bruner appear regularly in the literature surrounding the field of narrative inquiry and indeed are often attributed to the theory behind its use in the social sciences (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Dewey and his writings on the nature of experience for example are often quoted extensively by narrative researchers. Other names which appear regularly in the literature are Polkinghorne (1988) who has been associated with the use of narrative in the discipline of psychology, and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who have used narrative research extensively within the field of education in North America. Indeed Kim (2015, p. 18) credits Connelly and Clandinin with the first use of the phrase 'narrative inquiry' in an article for the Educational Researcher in 1990 where they discussed narrative inquiry and the theoretical implications of educational experience in lived and told stories. In Britain Cortazzi (1993) credits three factors with the

development of the approach in education: an increased emphasis on teacher reflection; an increased emphasis on teachers' knowledge, particularly how they think and how their knowledge contributes to their professional development; and thirdly, an increased interest in empowering teachers to talk about their experiences thereby giving them a voice.

This phenomenon or turn toward narrative inquiry in the social sciences has been referred to variously as "a narrative and auto/biographical turn", "a textual turn", "a post-modern turn" and a "literary turn". All of these terms and others refer to the burgeoning literature on narrative in almost every discipline and the idea of creating a space for or understanding of the narrative in a post-modern environment.

3.2.2 *A myriad of narratives to choose from!*

A reading of the literature around the narrative approach to research illustrates the differing views and confusing terminology around this concept, specifically its origins and distinct definition. Clandinin (2016, p. 11) points out that narrative has come "to refer to almost anything that uses, for example, stories as data, narrative or story as representational form, narrative as content analysis, narrative as structure, and so forth". In addition to the various definitions of narrative research, there are other forms of narrative, including life history, (as referred to above), autobiography, biography and life stories, all of which offer a different perspective and interpretation on the idea of human experience. It would appear that narrative is a contested, complex, transitional and developing field (Chase, 2005) with, as Riessman and Speedy (2007, p. 429) have observed, "realist, postmodern and constructionist strands". Clandinin (2013, p. 11) has expressed concern that this diversity in the ways

that narrative inquiry is taken up is both troubling and enriching because "without a clear sense of the epistemological and ontological commitments of those who work within the field, much is blurred". For Savin-Baden and Major (2013, p. 227) "the central point is that people's lives are storied and researchers re-present them in storied ways, regardless of the particular medium". Many voices in the literature would agree with the Connelly and Clandinin definition:

> People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study.
> (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 375)

For Sikes and Gale (2006, p. 45) "narrative" in the context of research, "is generally understood to refer to qualitative research that uses and tells stories" and they argue that those who use this approach do so because "they believe that it should seek to capture something of the sense of life as it is lived". In addition, they state clearly that "it is only possible to re-present, not re-create experiences, perceptions and emotions" (ibid, p. 45). According to Creswell (2007) the term "narrative" may be used to describe text or discourse but it is also a form of qualitative research which uses narrative, specifically stories, as a method of inquiry. Another view distinguishes between the analysis of narratives, which creates themes across stories, and narrative analysis in which researchers collect descriptions of events and then retell them in a story with a plot line (Polkinghorne, 1995). For Savin-Baden and Major (2013, p. 227) the central focus of any narrative approach is the process of telling the story in addition to the importance of the product, the story, itself. They claim that there are

four narrative perspectives, defining them thus: "narrative theory as a way of understanding the human experience; narrative as data; narrative as a specific method; and narrative as a research product" (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p. 227).

While it would appear that some researchers focus on the structure and organisation of the narrative particularly the way the narrator's inherent values determine the meaning (Mishler, 1986) others focus on the importance of social interaction defining narrative as "discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offers insights about the world and / or people's experiences of it" (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997, xvi). For Gill and Goodson (2011, p. 157) it is the latter definition which highlights for them the three particular characteristics of narrative which are "temporality, meaning and social encounters". Sikes and Gale (2006, p. 16) would appear to agree, stating that narrative accounts '"tend to emphasise subjectivities and contextual circumstances and the way in which events are causally linked and given meaning by their connections. They tell a story that is usually temporally and spatially located". Although this definition of narrative as "a story with a beginning, a middle and an end" may be a simple one, it is this idea of placing events in a sequence which some see as a defining characteristic and key feature of narrative (Elliott, 2005, p. 7).

As illustrated above, the idea of narrative and the way it is understood both in popular culture and in social research is very diverse. What seems clear is that researchers undertaking a narrative approach to research should be aware of these differing views as a means of enabling them to position their own approach correctly. Unlike some other qualitative research approaches, narrative research does not have a clear

structure or set of procedures to follow or "a set of overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation or the best level at which to study stories" (Squire, Andrews, and Tamboukou, 2008, p. 1). Polkinghorne (1988, p. xi) argues that the chosen research strategy should "work with the narratives people use to understand the human world" while Savin-Baden and Major (2013, p. 231) explain that narrative "researchers conceive, capture and convey the stories and experiences of individuals" and their approach is underpinned by a belief that "humans make meaning through narrative". Narrative then is a unique form of inquiry which combines "theory, process, data and product" and allows scholars to "see different and sometimes contradictory layers of other meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other and to understand more about individual and social change" (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013, p. 231; Squire et al., 2008, p. 1).

Essentially, Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 18) see narrative as the study of experience, especially an individual's life experience, and for them the best way of representing and understanding this is through narrative, "experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and key way of writing and thinking about it". It is this view of narrative as a way of understanding the human experience which most closely matches both my views as a researcher and my purported aims for the research. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p.2) posit, "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience". Educators, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) attest, are interested in life, and this study is interested in the lives of the

participants, particularly their narrated experiences surrounding their personal reasons for choosing to undertake an education doctorate.

3.2.3. A Deweyan view of experience

John Dewey (1938) emphasised the idea that humans had the capacity to not only reconstruct their experience, but to make meaning from it. To borrow his words "life is an education" (Dewey, 1938) and for Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 2) it is this thesis which is fundamental to their view of narrative inquiry – the idea that experience is transformed from a commonplace term to one of inquiry and one that "permits better understandings of educational life". They explain further Dewey's idea that while people are individual, and should be understood as such, their experiences are always personal and social, always in relation, and so they must also be understood within a social context (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). They use the example of an individual child's learning at school which must also be considered in relation to the fact that learning takes place with other children, with a teacher, in a classroom and in a community. This Deweyan theory of experience is, as expressed by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 39) a "changing stream that is characterized by continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment". While there are many differing philosophical views of experience it is this Deweyan criteria of experience: interaction and continuity, which is of particular interest to me for the purpose of this narrative study, especially the view from Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 42) that it is "a well-suited theoretical framework for narrative inquiries". As expressed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 2) "wherever one positions oneself in that continuum – the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future – each point has a past experiential base and leads to an

experiential future". This idea that people choose to do things based on past experiences may be a useful indicator in this research, and one which is worth exploring to its full potential. Certainly it may prove interesting to see if recent claims by Wellington and Sikes (2006, p. 723) that "biography is, and always will be, *the* crucial factor affecting perceptions and experiences" are corroborated from the data collected in this study.

In this study, I aim to follow this experience centred approach as advocated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Squire (2008) who lists four elements which are essential to this approach. These assume that narratives:

- Are sequential and meaningful
- Are definitively human
- 're-present' experience, reconstituting it, as well as expressing it
- Display transformation or change.

(Squire, 2008, p. 42)

These elements seem to be particular to an experience centred narrative approach with Hinchman and Hinchman drawing attention also to the importance of social interaction in the process of meaning making from human experience (Gill and Goodson, 2011; Sikes and Gale, 2006; Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997). For Patterson (2008, p. 37) personal narratives can be complex and subtle and she argues the experiential approach '' 'fits' many narratives better" leading to "richer and more comprehensive analyses and interpretations". She further defines the experiential narrative approach as "texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person and narration of past, present, future or imaginary experience" (Patterson, 2000, p. 128). Indeed an experience centred narrative approach could also be a life history or biographical approach, where sequence and meaningfulness are guaranteed by the informant following a life or theme. It may also

be used to address a life turning point or a more general experience, or may involve interviewing several people about the same experiences or phenomena.

I will attempt to do the latter by interviewing a group of professional staff working in Irish third level education, to explore their reasons for undertaking a doctorate in education. The professional doctorate is an attractive proposition for those seeking to pursue a model of doctoral education which allows them to develop their knowledge and work-based practice, and is also considered by many to be of economic benefit for the individual as well as society. Indeed, many higher education institutions claim their professional doctorates are aimed at addressing the career needs of practising professionals particularly those who aim for senior positions within their profession (Bourner et al., 2001). However, the individual motivations and experiences of these individuals are under-explored in the literature, especially in an Irish context. Through interviewing and the use of life grids, albeit in a limited way (the use of which will be examined in more detail later in the chapter), participants may use their life stories for self-reflection and self-inquiry (Gill and Goodson, 2011, p. 158). The process of collecting data in this way will give me an opportunity to come into contact with the participants and gather their narratives while they move through their own process of interpreting themselves through the retelling and reshaping of significant stories from their experiences. As posited by Gill and Goodson (2011, p. 158) "human life is chaotic, whereas narratives, through their plots, temporality and meaning, allow the chaotic nature of life to assume a certain structure and configuration".

Although individuals reshape their stories as they tell them, this is not to assume that they tell stories as they please, instead between the teller and the told a positioning

takes place where the narrative is "accepted, rejected or improved upon" in a way which shows how power can come in to play particularly when institutions become involved and write narratives without consulting the individuals concerned (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 5). This aspect of the narrative as experience is particularly interesting because although individuals will be interviewed and asked for their personal stories, their narratives will inevitably be related to societal ones and within the context of their working environment – their institutional lives as such. As Gill and Goodson (2011, p. 158) explain, "by recounting our lives, we place our actions in the context of intentions" and this according to MacIntyre (1984, p. 208) is "with reference to their role in the history of the setting or settings in which they belong". To clarify further, it is useful to look at the following quotation from Wellington and Sikes (2006) who, in the context of their research into student motivations for pursuing professional doctorates, concluded that:

> what has happened to us in the past affects the things that happen to us in the present, both through the social, cultural, academic and economic capital we possess and are able to draw on, and through the identities we have developed and had attributed to us.
> (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, p. 732)

Our lives and the lives of those people we study, are experienced on a continuum, and are contextualised within a longer term historical narrative and are given meaning because of the broader context - in narrative thinking, context is always necessary to give meaning (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). In qualitative research it is a requirement for the researcher to become an instrument of the research and to become embedded in and responsive to the context therefore it is essential that I as a researcher reflect on and acknowledge this position. As Riessman (1993) posits, narrative research "is distinguished by an interpretive thrust" and as Bruner (1990, p. 51) further explains has to do with how "protagonists interpret things". As a

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researcher I will then systematically "interpret their interpretations" (Riessman, 1993, p. 5). This idea of context will be revisited later in the chapter as I now explore the various approaches to narrative data analysis.

The participants in this research study were asked for their personal stories surrounding the reasons and motivations for choosing an educational doctorate, but I am also interested in narratives surrounding their personal lives and also their professional context and stories of their working lives especially those stories which give insight into their professional identity and working relationships. As Riessman (1993) has observed, narrative research gives prominence to human agency and imagination and is therefore well suited to studies involving subjectivity and identity. According to Gill and Goodson (2011, p. 159) part of the aspiration for narrative researchers is the concept of "co-constructing meaning" which will have obvious implications for the research design. Indeed this relationship between the researcher and the researched is at the heart of narrative research, essentially because the use of qualitative methods requires a collaborative approach where trust is established. This relationship and the ethical issues surrounding it will be explored in more detail later in the chapter. For now, the use of interview and life grids as data collection instruments will be explored.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

3.3.1. *Stories as experience*

It seems clear that our positionality or relationship with our participants and our topic will always be influenced by our epistemological and methodological beliefs and our lived experience in connection with the topic. Researchers become the instrument of

analysis and therefore must understand that their "interests, values, experiences, and purpose will influence the analysis" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 125). For Gill and Goodson (2011) researcher positionality influences all aspects of the research process including the way we collect our data and our relationship with the researched. Some argue that this is a particular strength of qualitative research, and certainly Riessman (1993, p.1) believes that "storytelling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with research and clinical materials, and what informants do with us. The approach does not assume objectivity but, instead, privileges positionality and subjectivity". Ultimately, the narrative researcher becomes a part of their own research and as they are responsible for what is put into the final report, they must be aware of their subjectivity. As Peshkin (1998, p. 17) posits, "one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed".

It seems clear that the collection of stories and narratives has become a popular way to collect data in social research. Stories are "rich in the subjective involvement of the storyteller" and "offer an opportunity for the researcher to gather authentic, rich and 'respectable' data" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 454-455). Like anyone pursuing research in the social sciences, educational researchers are interested in the science of people's lives particularly how they are composed and lived out and therefore they use narrative research to look for personal experiences within an education setting. Creswell (2008) contends that by using narrative the researcher can establish a close bond with their participant and through the medium of telling stories the participant will feel that their voice is relevant and has been heard. Elliott (2005, p. 4) agrees and suggests that narrative as a device creates and facilitates empathy in the interview which in turn encourages the interviewee to "externalize his or her feelings and

indicate which elements of those experiences are most significant". Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience and is a collaboration between the researcher and the participants "which takes place over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20). It is stories lived and told. The dilemma however, is how to carry out this experience centred narrative research, how do I gather these stories?

3.3.2. *Interviews*

As with many qualitative approaches, I chose to use in-depth semi-structured interviews for collecting data. The interview is often the main data collection method of research studies and can be a demanding and difficult task which requires critical attention and time. Even here there are choices and decisions to be made not only concerning the type of interview to conduct, but also the medium in which to conduct them and the ways in which the researcher will position themselves within the interview (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). It becomes the task of the interviewer to establish a rapport with all the participants because this interaction with the participant during interview will shape that relationship and therefore the way in which the interviewee will respond and act to the questions posed. Czarniaskwa (2004) makes an interesting point when she observes that during interview it is the narrator who holds the "power of knowledge" because they are the only experts on the subject of their own lives so the interviewer must in turn show their interest and respect by listening attentively.

The quotation below illustrates clearly how this relationship is essential for eliciting stories of experiences and also emphasises the importance of this method for gaining useful data:

> The focus of our analysis is the people who tell us stories about their lives: the stories themselves are a means to understand our subjects better. While stories are obviously not providing a transparent account through which we learn truths, story-telling stays closer to actual life events than methods that elicit explanations.
>
> (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000, p. 32)

While Squire (2008) talks about differences in interviewing techniques, Czarniawska (2004) refers to three different ways of collecting stories: spontaneous incidents of storytelling during prolonged field research; eliciting stories where the researcher at first asks the interviewee to tell them about certain "critical incidents" (she defines it as an observable human activity or incident that is untypical or happening rarely) and then asks structured questions in a way which will encourage reflection and recall; and thirdly, to ask for them! In some cases researchers will use a combination of these approaches during interview to collect stories and as Czarniawksa (2004, p. 45) admits, all techniques should be context sensitive as "a specific technique depends on opportunities, personal talents, and preferences". Stories do not lie around, instead they are "fabricated, circulated and contradicted" and long-lived narratives collected from experience centred research studies, "are sediments of norms and practices" and therefore deserve to be carefully considered (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 45).

Interviewing as a tool for social research then has value in that it offers a window into a part or sample of social reality. Interviews are unique in the way that each interaction in society is unique, and can uncover and explore meaning in lives. As defined by Weiss:

> Interviewing can inform us about the nature of social life. We can learn about the work of occupations and how people fashion careers, about cultures and the values they sponsor, and about the challenges people confront as they live their lives. We can learn also, through interviewing about people's interior experiences….We can learn the meaning to them of their relationships, their families, their work and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition.
>
> (Weiss, 1994, p. 1)

Although the participants were interviewed as individuals it was with an awareness that their narratives will always be in a social context. Furthermore, I had to be mindful that "each workplace, each group and community has a contemporary and historical repertoire of stories, sometimes divided into 'internal stories' and 'external stories'" (Czarniaswka, 2004, p. 45). Latham (2001, p. 45) reminds us that "when people tell their stories, there are many voices speaking through their words" and she refers to the cultural baggage interviewers carry into the interview. Inevitably the research questions are reflexively engaged by the interviewer and this will mean their own personal life and stories are intertwined with the participants during interview, resembling "a process of people coming together to learn about their lives and why they are so lived" (Gill and Goodson, 2011, p. 159).

While some would argue that narratives are produced spontaneously during interview and will be forthcoming if the interviewer is receptive and willing to listen, others would say that even when the environment is conducive and interviewers encouraging sometimes stories are not easy to elicit. Clearly, to encourage the participants to tell their stories, I had to be a good listener and in addition, be prepared to ask appropriate questions in a way which would not suppress the stories. As Mishler (1986, p. 69) observes "telling stories is far from unusual in everyday conversation and it is apparently no more unusual for interviewees to respond to questions with narratives if

they are given some room to speak". There is a need therefore to allow the interview to flow by asking open-ended questions using everyday language that addresses the interests of the interviewee. Most experience centred narrative interviewing is semi-structured with many scholars arguing for minimal interrogation to allow the interviewees to structure the sequencing and ordering of their stories (Gill and Goodson, 2011; Squire, 2008).

Although Kvale (1996) claims that interviews are not "a mutual exchange of views" some would argue for active interaction during the interview resembling a conversation or co-research. While it is important to address the issue of researcher power, it is also important to ensure that the interview process is disciplined by the fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview in the first place. Some scholars suggest that to elicit stories about particular experiences, the interviewer needs to use an approach like "can you give me an example?" Or "tell me more about when…?" (Squire, 2008, p. 49) This semi-structured approach is designed to prompt rich, detailed narratives allowing an exploration of the topic under investigation and permitting the interviewee to construct their answers in a meaningful way. Usually in an interview using semi-structured questions, the interviewer will use some pre-set questions but will add on questions typically as a response to reactions from the participant. The interview will usually move from general questions to more specific and perhaps more sensitive issues allowing the researcher to use the interview time more effectively. The interview process can be fraught with difficulty and it seems clear that preparation is an essential task of the process. Even with preparation, it was unavoidable that during the interviews I often had to think about and consider my next steps because as Czarniaswka (2004, p. 44) argues, "there is no authority in the

academic world who could foresee all contexts and all occurrences". Many voices in the literature draw attention to the difficulty of listening attentively citing it as a complex and difficult task. Indeed as Czarniaswka (2004, p. 45) observes of the story collector, in this case the researcher, "he or she listens selectively, remembers fragmentarily, and re-counts in a way that suits his or her purpose".

Some individuals may find it difficult to respond to a request to provide an account of their life. Elliott (2005) makes clear that from her experience it is better not to impose rigid structures on the interview by asking a standardised set of questions, and argues that respondents are more likely to talk about specific times and situations rather than a wider time frame, and she proposes the use of a pre-prepared life grid at the beginning of the interview. The use of a life grid for this research was of particular interest, because it allows the educational and career trajectories of the participants to be documented and then introduced into the study. This information can be used to set the context for the subsequent interviews. I will examine more closely now the life grid as a data collection instrument.

3.3.3. *Life grid method*

Life grids have been used primarily in quantitative research, especially in health related studies relating to older respondents, but increasingly have become used as an additional method to collect retrospective data in some qualitative life history narrative approaches. A famous study by Parry, Thompson and Fowkes in 1999 on smoking behaviour and life habits is often cited in the literature as an example of using the grid to best effect. Parry et al (1999) argued that the combination of the life grid method and semi-directed interviews added value to analyses and could lead to

new ways of understanding and presenting qualitative data. Although it remains an under researched area, more recently scholars have argued that the life grid method should be used as an instrument for qualitative data collection and analysis citing its effectiveness when used as a "mixed technique" for example, accompanying the biographical interview. Nico (2015) in particular has argued that using the life grid in this way can help improve the quality of both the objective information (the life lived) and the subjective information (the life told) collected. It is argued further that to preserve epistemological integrity the two paradigms should not be used in a parallel approach but rather be meshed at the research design stage so that the research topic can be considered on a multi-dimensional basis (Nico, 2015; Mason, 2006). The chronological event data will therefore support and enhance the qualitative data showing individual participants "their own trajectories, the causal or emotional relationships between events, and the relevance and impact of certain events on the direction of their lives" (Nico, 2015, p. 2).

In essence the life grid is a way of soliciting narrative from participants and is often used as a means of getting participants to talk more openly in interviews about particular times and experiences throughout their life course. Parry et al. (1999) found that there were five particular advantages when using the life grid interviewing approach: it facilitated recall in the area of the research interest; a high level of respondent engagement was necessitated; data collection was made more focussed because respondents were asked to perform specific tasks; respondents were able to draw on personally traumatic experiences in a way which diffused potentially charged areas; and respondents were able to take control over the course of the interview and the way in which their biographies were constructed. For many feminist researchers,

one of the main issues or dilemmas in research is the issue of power, and Parry et al. (1999) argue that while the balance of power is not necessarily shifted to the respondent, their authority and influence is clearly recognised through the mutual reconstruction of the life grid account and thus the researcher relinquishes some control over the data collection. Nico (2015) refers to this process at the co-production of data.

This idea of looking at our past experiences to understand our future is integral to narrative research especially when taken from a Deweyan perspective on experience, and the very nature of the life grid can contribute to this unlocking of experience from our life events. Put succinctly:

> Through narrative we try to make sense of how things have come to pass and how our actions and the actions of others have helped shape our history; we try to understand who we are becoming by reference to where we have been.
>
> (Mattingly and Garro, 1994, p. 771)

Scholars in the literature including Parry et al. (1999) argue that the joint endeavour of completing the life grid allows the participant to feel an intimate connection with the process and they suggest that this establishment of intimacy and rapport should not be understated because it allows the participant to feel at ease and can help with the recall of information. The potential of the life grid as an *aide memoire* (Parry et al, 1999) and its capacity to encourage the accurate recall of facts is considered to be a key strength of the life grid method. As Elliott (2005) observes, moving forwards and backwards between the different areas of a participant's life helps to stimulate memory while Blane (1996, p. 753) contends "cross referencing on the life grid enables subjects to improve the accuracy with which dates are remembered". For some, it is this aspect of the method which addresses the frequent problem with

retrospective data collection – that of rigour in both data collection and the sequence of events. In terms of sequencing, an argument exists that this concern with the chronological sequencing of the narrative may lead to Bourdieu's "biographical illusion" as he explains it:

> the narrative, whether biographical or autobiographical, for example, the discourse of the interviewee who 'opens up' to an interviewee offers events which may not all or always unfold in their strict chronological succession (anybody who has ever collected life histories knows that informants constantly lose the thread of strict chronological order) but which nevertheless tend or pretend to get organised into sequences linked to each other on the basis of intelligible relationships. The subject and the object of the biography (the interviewer and the interviewee) have in a sense the same interest in accepting the postulate of the meaning of narrated existence (and, implicitly, of all existence).
>
> (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 54)

Nico (2015) argues that the use of the life grid, combined with the interview, has the potential to avoid this illusion and help interviewees recount their narratives in the correct order especially in methodological strategies such as narrative inquiry, where both the timing of events and the reflexivity or reflection they display are emphasised.

3.3.4. *Use of the life grid in this study*

Essentially a life grid is a chart or table with rows or an axis showing years in a participant's life and columns representing different areas or experiences throughout their life. When complete it resembles a diagrammatic or visual chronology of particular aspects of a participant's life and can be adapted for purpose. In most studies the life grid is completed jointly between the researcher and the participant at the beginning of the interview allowing for a participatory interviewing experience and the establishment of a rapport. Studies in the literature suggest that innovative and task based methods of data collection, such as the life grid, can be a fun and informal way of collecting data and can encourage even the most reticent of interviewees to

speak and share their stories (Wilson et al., 2007). For the purpose of this research study, I prepared one grid for each study, and then emailed a copy to the participants in advance of the interview to allow them to see the physical nature of the grid and hopefully allay any fears over its completion. Similar to life grids used in other studies, the life grid I produced has, in addition to the time axis showing the years in the life of the participant, five columns which asks for age band, educational qualifications, career history, significant external events, and significant work events (see Appendix E). The life grid charts the educational and career chronology of the participant and in addition logs any other experiences which are of particular significance to the participant such as the birth of a child, for example, or a career promotion, the attainment of an educational qualification, and so on. I felt that this information would enhance the exploration of the experiences under investigation and possibly provide useful context and subject matter for probing questions in the subsequent interview.

The life grid was printed out on A3 sheets of paper with the intention that it would be completed jointly at the beginning of all interviews. Because it had been emailed prior to the interview, the participants had some time to familiarise themselves with the grid and think about the passage of time and any relevant significant events within that period. A series of supplementary open-ended questions was prepared under each column heading to initiate general discussion around that area, for example, under significant work events there was an attempt to try and tease out experiences or events linked to reasons and motivations for pursuing doctoral studies. In previous studies such as Scott et al (2004) participants referred to work relationships and institutional support mechanisms as influencing factors for undertaking doctorates, so providing

this column in the life grid was intended to gather possible information which could be used to stimulate discussion later in the interview.

The collaborative nature of narrative research is emphasised frequently in the literature and it is here that many of the ethical dilemmas occur. However, these issues are not solved merely with the completion of the administrative ethical review forms. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 170) stress, responsible researchers must be clear about their moral duties especially in relation to participatory relationships and they warn that "ethical matters shift and change as we move through an inquiry". Before looking more closely at some of the ethical considerations which impact upon this study, I will explain how the sample used in this research was chosen.

3.3.5. *Research Participants*

In qualitative research the sample size is usually purposefully selected to identify participants who have experienced the phenomenon the research is investigating and who will then yield rich, detailed descriptions of their experiences. For this research study, the sample group was taken from participants working in third level institutions in Ireland while studying for a doctorate in education (EdD). They had been purposefully chosen because they fulfilled the following criteria:

1. They were studying for, or had recently completed, a doctorate in education (EdD) either in Ireland or in the UK
2. They were employed in an Irish third level institution
3. They were a member of a professional staff grouping (but not academic teaching s1taff) and were probably not employed on an academic contract.

Five doctoral programmes were purposefully chosen, one based in the UK and four based in Ireland. As stated above, the target group were from a professional background working in Irish third level education in a professional capacity and probably engaged in academic activity of some sort but not necessarily employed on an academic contract. It was anticipated that among the respondents would be staff employed in various capacities including, learning development officers, educational developers or technicians, academic librarians, research support staff, higher education administrative professionals, human resource professionals, etcetera.

To ensure total anonymity, I approached a key contact in the School of Education at five UK educational institutions, all of which were offering an educational doctorate programme. Out of the five institutions approached, only four of the contacts responded to my email requesting that they send out, on my behalf, an invitation to interview to potential candidates who fulfilled the criteria above. I provided some accompanying information about the research project. Any interested candidates were to email me directly. After expressing a wish to participate, they were then contacted initially by telephone or email, and then by a more formal letter which outlined in some detail the aims of the research project and their expected contribution. Also attached to this letter were: the cover letter inviting participation; a participant information letter; and an interview consent form.

I was aiming initially for a group of between 10 and 12 participants. However, the response from the HEIs was poor. From the first two letters which were sent out, there were only two respondents and both of these were from academic teaching staff working on a part time basis and not employed on academic contracts. As neither of

these respondents met the key criteria they were not invited for interview. I then contacted three Irish institutions but disappointingly only another two respondents came forward. At this stage I decided to target a fifth educational doctorate programme based in Ireland and also to deliberately contact or purposively select participants to be included in the study with the rationale that they had experience of the phenomenon under investigation and if approached directly might be prepared to talk about that experience.

As Palys (2008, p. 697) claims, the best sampling strategy will "depend on the context in which researchers are working and the nature of their objective(s)" and it seemed appropriate at this point to choose another sampling approach to try and attract a larger group of participants. In the literature there are many examples of the purposive sampling approach being used with Palys (2008, p. 697) for example, arguing that it is "virtually synonymous with qualitative research". There are some who would argue against this purposeful or purposive approach and I will address this later in the chapter. According to Squire (2008, p. 48) researchers who are interested more in experience centred narratives and narrative themes' commonalities and differences across groups of individuals are more likely to use large interviewee numbers, although there is no attempt made to clarify what is meant by 'large'. I deliberately targeted through an informal individual email approach, a small group of people who were either studying for or had recently completed a doctorate in education, and who met the criteria necessary for inclusion in the study. These individuals were all outside of the original targeted institutions and had therefore not seen the original invitation to interview. Of all those approached, all agreed initially to take part in an interview so at this stage I had in total eight participants. Unfortunately three of the potential

participants declined to proceed once they received the documentation pertaining to the interview and life grid process so the final number of participants who took part in the study was five. I spoke by telephone to all of three participants who withdrew and they gave varying reasons for withdrawal; two cited time considerations and the other potential participant expressed reluctance to reveal personal information to someone who worked in the same profession.

3.3.6. *Are ethics a concern in narrative research?*

Ethical considerations play a large part throughout the process of research and a reading of the current literature will show a growing awareness of the attendant moral issues. Many definitions of the term "ethics" exist including those of Beauchamp and Childress (1994, p. 4) who contend that ethics is "a generic term for various ways of understanding and examining the moral life" and Israel and Hay (2006, p. 2) who comment that "ethical behaviour helps protect individuals, communities and environments, and offers the potential to increase the sum of good in the world". Many contemporary ethics review processes have been formulated because of examples of poor and morally reprehensible research incidents in the past. While some social scientists remain frustrated about what they consider to be unnecessary regulations and constraints on their research driven mostly by biomedical research arrangements, most scholars would agree that educational researchers have an increasing responsibility to not only be aware of the ethical dimension but also to take primary responsibility to ensure that they conduct ethical research (Pring, 2002). Although qualitative research is more concerned with answering questions than conducting experiments on individuals, the issue of ethics still exists albeit in a more subtle and nuanced form. For Savin-Baden and Major (2013, p. 319) however, "ethics

present complex questions often lacking clear answers" and they argue that ethics are not something which can be enforced like forms or codes but have instead an element of choice. Simons and Usher (2000, p. 1) agree with this perspective, arguing that ethics are not just a set of general principles which can be applied to any research situation instead "ethical principles are mediated within different research practices and thus take on different significances in relation to those practices".

Since research impacts upon human beings then ethics matter, because "all research potentially involves ethical issues and considerations" (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p. 89) and subsequently "requires consideration of the potential impact of that research on those involved" (Elliott, 2005, p. 134). Furthermore as Goodson and Sikes (2001) argue, even those who are distant from research can be affected by it, so those who are more intimately involved must have their rights protected and respected by the researcher. According to Webb (2006, p. 234) narrative research may be more laden with ethical concerns because "the very nature of narrative research makes the stories personal and exposing, the participants' rights complex and therefore the management in the field of ethical matters more fraught". While I took every care in this research study to adhere to the University of Sheffield School of Education ethical guidelines for research, I also felt it was important that I was aware of the burgeoning literature surrounding the area of ethics to ensure that all potential areas of complexity were addressed and reflected upon during this narrative study. But is it enough to simply apply a set of guidelines to your study to ensure that you have produced ethical research? Certainly, after completing and attending to the ethical review forms I felt more aware of my obligations to my participants, but a code cannot anticipate or resolve all issues. Israel (2015, p. 3) believes that social scientists *are* concerned about

ethics and he suggests that "by caring about ethics and acting on that concern we promote the integrity of research". This in turn ensures ethical behaviour from those around us and will promote accurate and original research elsewhere.

Many of the ethical concerns associated with narrative research may be related to the relationship between the researcher and the participants and the impact of the research on those individuals directly involved. Although participants in narrative research are generally more active participants within the research process and are more inclined to choose the events and experiences which matter to them and put their own construction on them, the potential for exploitation is still present. Social research by its very nature is intrusive and the process of studying people's lives by asking questions about issues they may not have previously considered have the potential to be unsettling. As Sikes and Goodson (2017, p. 61-63) have stated, "personal narratives have a status as personal, as well as research, data" and contributing to a narrative inquiry will "bring the relationship between the story, the life as lived, and methodology in acute focus". Additionally people's notions of what constitutes research and their involvement in it will influence "what they tell and how they tell it" (ibid, p. 62). Sikes (2017, p. 411) provides a succinct list of what she considers to be the main ethical dilemmas associated with narrative re-presentation and they are:

- Protect the people whose lives are the focus and substance of our research;
- Respectfully depict those people;
- Be alert to the potential misuse of interpretational and authorial power;
- Be aware of tricky and slippery questions and issues around truth /s (or 'truth/s');
- Avoid what Sabi Redwood (2008) and Bergin and Westwood (2003) call 'violent' textual practices which shape and tame the lives that we use as 'data' in order to present and privilege a version that serves our purposes.

I will now discuss how I considered some of those ethical issues throughout the research process.

3.3.7. *Taking ethical steps to protect my research participants*

It took some time for me to apply for ethics approval from the university. Initially I found the process very hard to comprehend and I struggled with the idea of writing about the ethical considerations in my study when I had no real idea about what they might be. The only way around this for me was to read the literature on ethics in the narrative inquiry process including any associated with the data collection methods of interview and life grid to uncover the real life ethical complexities that arise in research. It is because we are dealing with real people and their lives that we can never know for sure what impact we will have on the lives of our participants. Before discussing further some of the issues which arose during my study, I have briefly outlined the initial procedure which I followed at the outset of the study to make sure that I attended to culturally mediated practices.

Once each participant had responded to my initial call for research respondents, I arranged by email to contact them directly by telephone. This phone call gave me an opportunity to discuss the study with them in more detail and arrange, with their permission, to forward further information if they were still interested in taking part. My intention was to minimise the intrusion to each participant by providing as much information as possible in advance about the aims of the project, the exact nature of their contribution, an explanation of the interview process including completion of the life grid and a copy of the life grid. This information was contained in the following documents: the Cover Letter to all participants (Appendix B); the Participant

Information Sheet (Appendix C); the Interview Consent Form (Appendix D); and the Life Grid (Appendix E). This was to ensure that they had sufficient time to study the material and decide whether or not they wished to take part in the research before signing the written consent form. At this stage, three people who had initially agreed to take part in the study withdrew and I rang them individually to discuss their reasons for doing so.

Once participants had agreed to take part in the study and had received the documents outlined above, I then emailed each individual to ask if I could telephone them to talk over any further questions they might have and if they were in agreement, to discuss meeting up for interview. Often the very inconvenience of attending for interview can be a deterrent and I addressed this by locating the interview at a time and place which suited the participant and also by ensuring that they were informed about the possible length of the interview. The rooms used for interview were always pre-booked and do not disturb signs placed on the door to ensure maximum privacy and less disturbance. In some cases the participants requested we meet in an alternative venue such as their office, or a hotel where we could get a cup of coffee. In the case of the hotel, I made sure to choose a suitable venue which was comfortable, where we could not be overheard and where we could be undisturbed for a long period of time. All participants were asked to give their permission to record the interview and they were informed about the possible taking of notes during the process. I informed each participant that I would send them a copy of the transcript when I had finished transcribing the interview, a process known as member checking or respondent validation. They were assured that on receipt of the transcript, they could ask for changes to be made or for information to be withdrawn. At this stage they were also

informed that they could withdraw completely from the study. Other matters such as confidentiality of material including anonymity for participants and the storing of data were all addressed.

In this study I asked my participants to share their experiences with me of the phenomenon under investigation and although I asked for their subsequent approval about how I used their words and stories, how can I ever know that they gave this approval completely willingly? Participants can reveal through interview some of the most sensitive areas of their lives including things that they have never revealed to anyone else. Again, how can I know that my participants weren't subsequently embarrassed or regretful about revealing a particular aspect of their life to me? Perhaps they felt powerless to stop the process once they received their narrative accounts. Furthermore, the idea of re-storying someone else's experiences is fraught with ethical dimensions and I struggled for a long time with the idea of how I might present my data truthfully. It is a relief at the start of your data collection stage to be given ethical approval by your institution but "research is neither neutral nor innocent practice" so my ethical and moral responsibility as I saw it, was only beginning (Sikes, 2006). Gaining informed consent, using pseudonyms and seeking approval through member checking were all carried out but to proceed as an ethical researcher is to be honest with ourselves and to recognise and be explicit about our own presence in our research, not just as a researcher, but as a person with ideas, thoughts, views and experiences. My version of reality therefore will be influenced by my social positioning and my life experiences and so while the narratives I present should not be regarded as the lives themselves, it will be as close as I can get (Sikes, 2017).

Perhaps one of the simplest things we as researchers can do is to respect and protect the very people whose lives and words are the focus of our research. Interestingly, one of the ethical issues which arose for me concerned information given to me during completion of the life grid. The completion of a life grid is often cited in the literature as being a bonding exercise and I found that the completion of this joint exercise at the beginning of the interview generally relaxed the participants and encouraged a more equal relationship. Elliott (2005) gives examples of research where participants had enjoyable interview experiences because they were happy to contribute to what they felt was worthwhile research and also because they were given an opportunity to talk at length about their own events and experiences to an interested listener. I certainly found this to be the case and the audio tapes reflect my experiences. However, at the beginning of Patrick's interview I forgot to introduce the life grid and we had already begun the interview when I remembered. We agreed together that we would continue with the interview and complete the life grid at the end. During the completion of the form I noticed a gap in Patrick's life experiences so I drew his attention to it and asked him about it. It was then that he revealed that he had been a priest and had subsequently left the priesthood. I noted this down while Patrick added a few additional comments but I didn't specifically ask him for any more details because I sensed that he was reluctant to discuss this further. Also, the topic hadn't arisen during the interview so I thought that it was probably something he hadn't intended to discuss. As we packed up I asked him if he had any objections about my referring to this piece of information and he said no.

Although I transcribed the interview fairy quickly after the event and had also made some notes immediately afterwards, it was some time before I came to analyse

Patrick's interview. When it came to re-storying his narrative, I made reference to his being a priest. However, I reflected (in truth, agonised) quite a lot on this before deciding that I would include it in the narrative. When it was sent to him for validation I fully expected Patrick to ask for the narrative to be changed but he didn't. However, the inclusion of what I feel was probably very private information is something that I continued to reflect upon. Institutional ethical approval is important to make researchers aware of all the attendant moral issues and obligations which come with research but I feel strongly that the researcher must understand that careful thought and attention is required throughout the study and must continue long after the thesis is uploaded to a library catalogue and made publicly available. Researchers will continue to gain value from their findings by speaking at conferences for example, or publishing in journals but an interesting point is made by Tolich (2017) who argues that researchers are deluding themselves if they think they are really "giving voice" to participants and allowing them to be fully collaborative in the research endeavour if they are not offering them the right to negotiate and re-negotiate their consent throughout and perhaps even prior to publication. As he says "the story the participants tell is their own, the analysis is the researchers, but the final sign off is the participants" (Tolich, 2017, p. 603). This is certainly food for thought particularly now as I consider my next steps as the research study draws to a close.

Before explaining the process of data analysis for this study, I feel it is important to address briefly the question of how the data was transcribed.

3.3.8. Transcription of the data

As defined by Wengraf (2001, p. 212) a transcript is "the written version of the interview with as many annotations and commentaries as you see fit" but the process of capturing an interview to convey the exact detail and essence of the interaction is not an easy task. Often the interview will not go exactly to plan: questions will not be delivered as intended; interviewees will be too brief or non-efficient in their responses; speech will be faltering or hesitating or people will speak over each other (Wengraf, 2001). People do not speak in fully formed grammatical sentences and so the task of transcribing exactly what has been said and how, is a complex one. As Wengraf (2001) suggests, the first hearing of the interview recording is perhaps the most important one because it conjures up subjective memories from the original interview experience and all of these memories, feelings and interpretations are hard usable data. The first draft of the transcript is often transcribed verbatim because it allows the researcher to capture all the hesitations, gaps, changes in mid-sentence etc. which may occur during the interview, but which all offer possible insight into the interviewee's feelings or state of mind (Wengraf, 2001). It is inevitable however that any representation of the interview will be less complex than the event itself and thus data may be unintentionally lost or flawed. Ways to remedy some data loss which I used in the transcriptions for this study included de-briefing and/or transcribing immediately after interview alongside the keeping of a journal to jot down memories and ideas as they occurred. As Wengraf (2001, p. 210) points out "the tape will always wait patiently to be transcribed; the ideas that spring from you as you write will vanish instantly".

The interviews lasted generally between 45 minutes and 2 hours and therefore the volume of data to be transcribed was sizeable. I transcribed the audio recordings promptly after the interviews had taken place (usually within 2 days) as a means of getting close to the data and also recalling details and observations during the interview process. I logged these memos and additional sources of data in a journal to serve as additional sources of data. I then presented the transcribed data in a format to show the question being asked by the researcher, including any other comments, utterances and clarifications and then the narrative response from the interviewee. Pauses were timed and all repetitions included. However, as Mishler (1986, p. 48-49) observes, "there are many ways to prepare a transcript and each is only a partial representation of speech". Transcription can only go so far because stories are often conveyed through tone of voice, gesticulation, eye contact, emotions and proximity or positioning of the body. I found it difficult to convey some of these nuances in the transcript and the journal proved a useful aid for this purpose.

The presentation of data through transcript will always be influenced by theoretical and practical considerations and it should be acknowledged here that I as the researcher will have had a role in creating that narrative account: from the questions I choose they ask and the way I ask them; to how I listen and what I hear; to how I then present the data in the transcript and what I choose (intentionally or otherwise) to leave out. The transcription is in itself a construction "always partial and selective, and value laden" and therefore can never be seen as a neutral document (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 29). Even the way it is laid out can be problematic with hierarchical differences being shown in how pauses, silences and punctuation are conveyed (Mishler, 1986). All of these actions are continuously guided and influenced by the

researcher's (my) own worldview. As Butler-Kisber (2010) suggests, the researcher must be aware of these issues and be reflective and reflexive at all times. Thinking about how the data will be analysed is a process that occurs from early on in the research process. I will now clarify the analytic process for this study.

3.4 Data Analysis: A Narrative Inquiry into Experience

The analysis of data is perhaps one of the most critical phases of research and is both an intellectual and active endeavour. It is defined thus:

> Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organising and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorisation, hypothesising, comparison, and pattern finding. It always involves what Wolcott calls 'mindwork'.
>
> <div align="right">(Hatch, 2002, p. 148)</div>

Rather than simply relating what people have told us, analysis aims to provide an informed interpretation of their accounts. It is not enough to simply offer the transcript as a form of argument, the researcher and now analyst, must offer a convincing analysis with enough of the data presented to support any research claims. In qualitative research in particular, there is a sense that the analytical process is more fluid allowing for the emergence of themes as opposed to a more structured focus on fixed categories. It is through the unloosening of data that we are able to shed light on the phenomenon under investigation and allow "the voices of the participants to be heard and for new understandings to emerge" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 87). Ultimately the analytical method chosen to make sense of the data will influence the results or themes that are discovered.

As narrative approaches in research are varied, it makes sense that there will also be differing approaches used when interpreting data in narrative studies. While some qualitative methodologies provide a specific structure on how analysis should be conducted, there is as yet, not one single analytic approach which defines narrative research. At the heart of all narrative approaches is the "importance of the storied-ness of lives: the idea that individuals live lives and construct meaning with, in and through stories" (Savin-Baden, 2014, p. 241). But the process of gathering these stories and then analysing them is complex and "narrative data can easily seem overwhelming: susceptible to endless interpretation, by turns inconsequential and deeply meaningful" (Squire et al., 2013, p. 1). So where to begin?

Scholars offer several variations in how analysis is carried out and have attempted to classify these variations into a framework or typology to show some of the methodological and epistemological differences at the roots of the techniques. According to Elliott (2005) there are two main typologies. The first typology identified is that of Mishler (1995) whose framework focuses on what is commonly understood as the three main functions of language, namely meaning, structure and interactional context, so researchers may be interested firstly in the actual content which are the events and experiences, then secondly they may be interested in the structure or form of that content namely the way the story is put together, and thirdly their interest may be in the performance of narratives defined as the institutional and interactional context (Elliott, 2005, p.38). The second typology Elliott (2005) puts forward is that of Lieblich et al. (1998) who posit the idea that all approaches to narrative analysis can be described using two dimensions: the first characterised by an examination of either the content or form of the narratives; and the second

characterised by either a holistic or categorical approach. A holistic approach is defined as one which aims to keep the narrative in its entirety and will try and understand it in context to other parts of the narrative while the categorical analysis extracts sections into categories for analysis and does not necessarily try and preserve the integrity of the whole account. However Elliott (2005) points out that these distinctions are oversimplified because there will always be researchers who are interested in more than one of these aspects of analysis.

More simply, Savin-Baden and Major (2014) claim that there are three key ways to analyse narrative data: structural analysis which focuses on core events; sociology of stories which focuses on cultural, historical and cultural contexts; and functional analysis which focuses on what work stories do in participants' lives. Similarly Squire et al. (2014) offer three approaches and they define them as: structural analysis where the narrative grammar, syntax and structure are the focus of analysis; content analysis where themes and meanings are the focus of interest; and context analysis which analyses the narrative to see how it works and what it does particularly as a moment or event of strong significance which affects an audience. Even within these categories there are distinctions and different versions of approach, with none being mutually exclusive. Indeed the various approaches offered by the scholars above are in many ways different interpretations of the same thing. Riessman (2008) for example offers four broad approaches to data analysis including structural, thematic, dialogic/performative and visual, with the latter approach, using images as data, becoming increasingly popular in the literature. Interestingly, Squire et al. (2014, p. 12) refer to both programmatic narrative research where researchers take a variation on an approach, rename it and stress a particular theoretical or methodological

framework, and pragmatic narrative research where researchers follow a pragmatic direction "choosing theories, methodologies, data and modes of analysis that are not unique to any one approach, although also often trying to make sure at the same time that they are aware of the theoretical and methodological commonalities and differences between the approaches". In recent times, for example, there has been a move away from purely content focussed analysis to an approach which seeks to gain some context of how the story is told or the conditions in which it was told in order to gain a deeper understanding.

Although I frequently encountered Dewey's theories of experience in my reading and felt from early on that it fitted my study very well, I thought that in order to make an informed decision about the choice of analysis to be used in this research study, I should also explore other ways of interpreting the data. While the benefits of using a structural approach were considerable, and the work of Labov (1972) and Labov and Waletsky (1967) on personal experience narratives cited widely in the literature, the basis of their analysis appears to be both event-centred and text-centred with a formal and non-interactional approach which I did not feel offered the subjective experience this study needed. While Patterson (2008) argues that "it makes no sense to treat the complexity and subtlety of the narration of experience as though it *should* have an orderly, complete structure by reducing it to the one type of text that conforms to the paradigmatic model", others (Squire et al., 2014; Connelly and Clandinin, 2007; Lieblich et al., 1998) argue that narrative inquiry is not simply a way to represent data but a way to both understand and study experience. As Clandinin (2013) explains "clarifying, and continually working with and from, a transactional or relational ontology" is fundamental to narrative inquiry. It is to this Dewey-based understanding

of experience that I return again, especially the use of a content focussed model exploring themes and meanings as the focus of the research interest by examining each individual narrative in its entirety in a holistic way. I felt that this type of rich experience-based content analysis could work well alongside the additional contextual information gleaned from the life grids.

3.4.1. *Experience-centred analysis – an interpretive framework*

Squire (2013, p. 57) has written extensively about both event-based and experience-based approaches to content data analysis and she offers a more conceptual framework than the Labovian model to analysis while conceding that "analysing the human meanings of experience-centred narratives is an even more controversial project". When we consider personal narratives as events, Squire (2013) argues that we tend to neglect three important narrative elements and she describes them thus:

> 1. Talk that is not about events but that is nevertheless significant for the narrator's story of 'who they are'.
> 2. Representation itself. The uncertain, changeable nature of written, spoken and visual symbol systems means that stories are distanced from the happenings they described, have many meanings, and are never the same when told twice.
> 3. Interactions between storyteller and listener, researcher and research participant, in the co-construction of stories.
>
> (Squire, 2013, p. 47)

Furthermore, Patterson (2013) suggests that an experiential approach tends to 'fit' many narratives better while also allowing researchers to produce richer and more comprehensive analyses and interpretations. While it can be easy to encourage people to tell stories, especially personal stories, there are challenges for analysis as Savin-Baden and Major (2014, p. 241) attest, "stories can be difficult to interpret in terms of the relationship between the story told in interview and the story retold in the presentation of data". However Squire et al. (2014, p. 9) argue that it is important to

"examine stories as stories" rather than analysing stories in any way we choose, and as a result they differentiate between the analysis of narratives and narrative analysis, suggesting that it is the latter which is taking the narrative character into account. They go further to clarify that "narrative thematic analysis focuses on themes that develop across stories, rather than just on themes that can be picked out from stories" (Squire et al., 2014, p. 9).

Indeed this definition put forward by Squire et al. (2014) is based on the earlier work of Polkinghorne (1995) who has also made this distinction between analysis of narratives and narrative analysis and who in turn has based his understanding of narrative on Jerome Bruner's (1986) contribution to this field of study particularly his concept of two modes of thought in understanding truth and reality: paradigmatic mode and narrative mode, where the paradigmatic mode refers to the world of science and how humans logically categorise the world by testing hypotheses about the nature of reality and the narrative mode which is concerned more with human intention and meaning that is derived from experiences through stories. Polkinghorne (1995, p. 12) explains "analysis of narratives" as a process where researchers collect stories as data and the analysis results "in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories or characters or settings" while his definition of "narrative analysis" is described as a process where the "researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories". The end result should be a move "from elements to stories" in a process often referred to as restorying. Creswell describes it thus:

> the process in which the researcher gathers stories, analyzes them for key elements of the story, (e.g. time, place, plot, and scene) and then rewrites the story to place it into a chronological sequence. When individuals tell a story, this sequence is often missing or not logically

developed. By restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas.

<div align="right">(Creswell, 2008, p. 519)</div>

The RITES (Read, Interrogate, Thematize, Expand and Summarize) rubric for analysis put forward by Leggo (2008) is a heuristic method for interpreting narratives. The rubric, with its acronymic title and simple set of rules, may appear to make the complex process of data analysis which often defies guidelines look like a formulaic 'paint-by-numbers canvas', but it is in fact a useful way of getting started with data analysis, especially for the novice narrative researcher. The process is basically a systematic way of approaching each transcript: to read the whole narrative to gain a general sense of the story; to interrogate by asking some basic questions – Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? So what?; to thematise by re-reading the narrative with a focus on a theme, then to spell out the parts of the story which relate to the theme; to expand on the theme by reflectively and imaginatively drawing connections and proposing possible meanings and finally; to summarise the theme in a general statement or two in order to indicate clearly what is learned from the narrative.

Squire (2013, p. 57) too suggests starting by describing the interviews thematically and then developing and testing theories "that give a predictive explanation of the stories, moving back and forth between the interviews themselves and generalizations about them in a classic 'hermeneutic circle', using a combination of top-down and bottom-up interpretive procedures". Unlike other qualitative thematic content analyses, this process is more concerned with the sequencing and progression of themes and "foregrounds the specifically narrative aspects of texts' themes" (Squire, 2013, p. 57). For Riessman (1993, p. 14) the process of data analysis, while

necessary, can also be "a kind of betrayal" where a story is pasted together and born again in an alien tongue. As she explains:

> The challenge is to identify similarities across the moments into an aggregate, a summation. An investigator sits with pages of tape recorded stories, snips away at the flow of talk to make it fit between the covers of a book, and tries to create sense and dramatic tension. There are decisions about form, ordering, style of presentation, and how the fragments of lives that have been given in interviews will be housed. The anticipated response to the work inevitably shapes what gets included and excluded.
>
> (Riessman, 1993, p. 13)

This "false document" is a necessary one because as Riessman (1993, p. 14) argues, "narratives are interpretive and, in turn, require interpretation" and the life told in a conversation or interview, even by a talented storyteller, does not come "ready-made as a book". Furthermore every text is open to different interpretations. As Rabinow and Sullivan (1987, p. 12) attest they are "plurivocal, open to several readings and to several constructions".

3.4.2. Moving forward narratively

There were times when I found the sheer volume of material on narrative as a methodological approach to be both overwhelming and confusing, especially the material on analysing and presenting the data in a narrative study. Clandinin (2016) refers to a "narrative parade" where data is analysed using many different analytic frames and where the descriptor 'narrative' covers so much. She believes that it is time to carefully attend to the meaning of these terms. Mischler (1995, p. 88) has observed there is a "state of near anarchy in the field". Although I had read extensively on the many different approaches which may be taken, it has proved difficult to translate some of these theories into practice when working with the data, for example, it has proven challenging to re-story the accounts of the participants

especially when I have felt that rather than interpreting their experiences I am merely substituting their experiences with my own vocabulary. Nevertheless, to re-story the normative sequence of life events, as offered by the participants at interview, into temporally coherent narratives has also seemed the most natural way to present the data. While interpretive research demands that we understand how our research participants make sense of their experiences, as Elliott (2005, p. 37) acknowledges, this in itself is a subjective exercise that cannot be represented by a method and yet requires understanding or "imaginative reconstruction" on the part of the researcher. Furthermore, "narratives are usually told in a specific social context for a particular purpose" and therefore it would be appropriate to adopt a more socially and culturally directed research framework of analysis to the data. As Riessman (1993, p. 5) has offered, narratives can offer insights about social life and often culture "speaks itself" through an individual's story. It is argued that stories because they are human are always deeply social and therefore, even without an audience, you are still speaking as a social being or subject and using the social medium of language (Squire, 2013; Denzin, 1989). Although as Squire et al. (2014) point out this does not necessarily mean that narrative research gives a voice to those who are excluded or oppressed or experiencing any other social problem, instead it is more that people are giving their voices to the research. Additionally, a further very important point is made here:

> When we say that narratives are forms of everyday meaning-making and that they are distinguished from theories by their human particularities, we also have to acknowledge that such meaning-making is socially, culturally and historically specific, so that story meanings are never accessible across all social, cultural and historical contexts. It is useful in this respect to think of Joan Scott's (1991) important reframing of experience as 'discursive', and as a process of engagement and social practice, rather than as a naturalized, individualized and coherent guarantee of truth.

> (Squire, 2013, p. 61)

Cultural scripts not only influence the way we live our lives but also the ways we remember and feel about our pasts (Baddeley and Singer, 2007). Studies have shown that by the end of childhood individuals have learned how to tell stories, and by adolescence these stories, memories and other pertinent information surrounding the self has been organised into a coherent life story (Habermas and Bluck, 2000). Narrative research has the ability to chart identity across the human life span while showing the shifting contributions of self and society and offering this explanation of self to others (Baddeley and Singer, 2007). Put simply:

> At the start of our lives, we inherit a story given to us by our culture through our parents. Our life is in some sense an effort to forge our unique version of this inherited story. We fill it and embellish it with our lived experiences as we understand them. Because we and our story are embedded in a social matrix, we are motivated to develop our stories in coherent forms that are understandable to ourselves and can be understood by others in our culture.
>
> (Baddeley and Singer, 2007, p. 198)

Therefore stories are personally meaningful and "people shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are" (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). Clandinin (2013, p. 13) puts it simply when she says that "narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. It is nothing more and nothing less. Narrative inquiry is situated in relationships and in community, and it attends to notions of expertise and knowing in relational and participatory ways". This view of narrative is, she argues, a Dewey-based understanding of experience as transactional not passive. As Dewey (1958, p. 246) posited "in an experience, things and events belonging to the world, physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the live creature is changed and developed through its intercourse with things previously external to it". Central to Clandinin's (2013, p. 204) Dewey-based approach to narrative inquiry is the notion that the researcher

makes a commitment to "understanding lives in motion, a commitment to seeing and representing lives as always in the making" and a commitment to co-composing the narratives throughout the research process with the participants, in a way that is attentive both to the "temporal unfolding of experience, and to the unfolding of our relationship". The difficulty is, as Atkinson (2005, p. 206) posits, that social scientists who base their research exclusively on data obtained through personal interviewing "are in danger of recapitulating one of the key features of contemporary society rather than examining and analysing it".

3.4.3. Looking for social and cultural meanings in personal experiences

Looking back over some of the work by Squire (2013) I noticed that she believed that it was possible to adhere to an experience-centred approach while orientating the research to take into consideration the social and cultural aspects of personal narratives. I also read with interest some work by Grbich (2007, p. 125) who defines narrative research as falling into two camps, socio-linguistic and socio-cultural. Her definition of socio-linguistic follows earlier definitions concentrating on the structure of narratives, while her definition of socio-cultural "looks at the broader interpretive frameworks that people use to make sense of particular incidents in individuals' lives". Of particular interest to me was her advice on research questions which are best suited to this approach, notably where the researcher was interested in the experiences of those participating in particular programmes, or in the case of this research study, in an education doctorate. Furthermore, Grbich (2007, p. 130) posits that the socio-cultural approach "goes beyond language structures to the broader interpretive frameworks that people use to make sense of their everyday happenings/episodes, usually involving past-present-future linking" and the stories

will therefore not only reflect "culture, ideology and socialisation" but will also provide political and historical insights impacting on the lives of the storytellers (Grbich, 2007, p. 131). Through the unloosening of the data I could see already that some of the themes and stories were falling into areas that could be considered socio-cultural. However, an argument used by opponents of the culturally-oriented approach stress that it is possible in the process of analysis to lose sight of the individual stories.

The challenge then is to look at the narratives as 'stories with truths' rather than looking for a single truth and to then reframe those stories without losing their individual nature. As Riessman (1993, p. 18) has observed "stories told in research interviews are rarely so clearly bounded, and locating them is often a complex interpretive process. Where one chooses to begin and end the narrative can profoundly alter its shape and meaning". I will now outline how I analysed the data.

3.4.4. My data: beginning the narrative analysis

To begin the process of data analysis and taking all of the frameworks explored above into consideration, I initially adopted a loose rubric comprising of elements of them all. I started with a process which involved a familiarisation of the data, actively reading and re-reading the transcripts, taking each interview as an individual narrative, listening to the spoken words from the audio recordings, and reading and re-reading the information in the life grids. I felt that this multiple listening and reading approach was essential in that it helped me to move closer to the data. Interestingly I found that by actively listening to the recordings I was able to put myself back in the interview room and could not only picture my participants more clearly but could also hear their voices as I re-read the transcripts. This immersion technique involved

annotating the transcripts and in addition, I added some notes from the debriefing sessions to the transcripts to give additional context. I felt that this process was in keeping with Polkinghorne's (1995) ideas about the difference between "analysis of narratives" and "narrative analysis" and would mean that I could then re-story each individual case to present my data findings.

After the initial familiarisation of the data I started the analysis process again, taking the data relevant to each participant as a separate case. Each case included the interview transcript with relevant annotations and reflections, the life grid with added comments and the original tape recording. I found that using both the RITES method described above, and Squire's (2013) suggestion of looking for themes in a hermeneutic circle approach, from the top down and bottom up, to be an effective initial tool. Using the RITES method firstly I approached each transcript and supplementary data in the same way, reading the whole narrative to gain a sense of the story, asking basic questions such as who, what, where, when, etc. and then re-reading the narrative with a focus on a theme. Each theme was identified and noted. Using Squire's (2013) ideas, I then took one theme at a time and went back through each transcript to emphasise those parts of the story which related to the theme, sometimes expanding that theme by trying to draw connections and proposing possible meanings. This involved isolating stories where possible within the narratives and looking for the boundaries of where stories ended and others began in a process which involved keeping the stories as entities. I then explored the content of each story before re-examining the additional context provided by the life grids, to see if it could add any layers or shed light on or explain particular life events or experiences referred to or alluded to or even not referred to in the interview. In particular I was

looking for examples in the narratives where participants' present experiences or situations may have been influenced or shaped by past events or experiences in line with Dewey's thoughts of interaction and continuity of experience. Finally, I summarised each theme and tried to identify any emerging sub-themes or threads. I had started the process with pen and paper drawing lines between the themes and threads because it seemed a more natural way to work but the transcripts became very messy very quickly which meant I had to replace the copies I was working on several times.

This process took a considerable amount of time because of the wealth of material collected through interview and life grid but once complete, I stood back from the data for a little while to process and reflect on all that I had read and learned. The literature often refers to researchers getting too close to their data and this standing back or reflective process can often help them see the way ahead more clearly. However, it is also necessary to keep in mind the words of Squire (2013, p. 67) who warns that we "will be aware that we cannot be fully reflexive, that there will always be material that lies beyond the realm of our interpretations and that we may get things very wrong for our interviewees, or for other audiences". Through my process of unloosening the data I could see already that some of the themes and stories were falling into areas that could be considered socio-cultural and the danger here for me was that I could lose sight of the individual stories.

Keeping this in mind, I then began again the data analysis process, using fresh copies of the transcripts and the life grids so that I could come new to the narratives in an attempt to see if I could uncover further themes, sub-themes and threads. This process

was continued several more times until I felt that I had coded all the significant experiences and themes but at no time did I step away completely from the narratives. I transferred the themes and sub themes to an Excel spreadsheet and this helped me to identify crossover sub-threads. When I began to write up and present my findings I found that each time I read a transcript I was uncovering possible new meanings and themes. I was also coming to the realisation that I would have to rethink the way that I was going to present my data because themes were not just evident in individual narratives, they were developing across all the narratives.

3.4.5. Presenting the data narratively: a Deweyan lens on experience and identity

Dewey (1938) and his theory of experience is often cited in the literature as the philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry and it is this Dewey-based approach to narrative inquiry which is favoured by Clandinin (2013) who argues that "there is no final telling, no final story, and no one singular story we can tell". After reflecting on the considerable literature I had read, I decided to use the narrative approach which seemed to make most sense to me in terms of analysing my data. This Dewey-based pragmatic understanding of experience as put forward by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin (2013) sits most comfortably with my own epistemological understanding of narrative as both a methodology and the phenomenon under study. Intuitively I had already approached my research with the view that I wanted to study the experience of my participants as they had lived it. I therefore decided to approach the data analysis using Dewey's ideas that experience is relational and also continuous particularly the idea that knowledge generation is temporal and that:

> experience is always more than we can know and represent in a single statement, paragraph, or book. Every representation, therefore, no matter how faithful to that which it tries to depict, involves selective emphasis of our experience.

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Dewey refers to experience as something that "stretches" over time. For Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 41) this stretch can extend into "realms of personal, aesthetic and social meaning" and is useful therefore to emphasise the social dimension of a narrative inquiry. The data generated in this study is taken from stories told by the research participants about their particular experience of the phenomenon under investigation. These stories are arguably "the result of a confluence of social influences on a person's inner life, social influences on their environment and their unique personal history" (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 41). As Baddeley and Singer (2007) demonstrated earlier, we begin our life with an inherited story that we slowly craft to be our unique possession but in the end we return this story to the vast library of shared stories which is our culture. This life story or narrative that we forge of our life experiences is in fact, as McAdams (1988, 1990) argues, our identity and is the fundamental way in which we know ourselves and to a large extent are known by others (Baddeley and Singer, 2007). The challenge therefore in the analysis of the data is to find, identify and present the three aspects of a Dewey influenced narrative inquiry in what Clandinin (2016, p. 12) describes as the "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place and sociality".

> The focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experience but also on the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world, an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing, and interpreting texts.
>
> (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, pp. 42-43)

Downey and Clandinin (2010, p. 392) capture this process perfectly as they describe narrative inquirers who focus "one eye on stories lived and told and the other on the stories and lives that live at their edges, creating an orientation that can feel more

dizzying than directional, more a muddling around in the myriad of stories that compose a life than making any situation in it clearer with the goal of moving it along".

I aim to present the findings from this study in two ways. Firstly I will put forward a storied portrait of all the participants in an outcome which Polkinghorne (1995, p. 16) refers to as an "explanation that is retrospective" with past events being linked together sequentially. By presenting each narrative in this way I aim to make visible both common and differing aspects of individual experience using the words of each participant to illustrate their life story and identity. The narrative account will bring together the stories obtained through interview and also through use of the life grid method. In an interview with Clandinin and Murphy (2007) Polkinghorne made clear that he believes narrative inquiry is less about looking for themes that are common across people and more about a different kind of knowledge, a "knowledge of the particular, the unique, the development rather than a kind of abstractive common". This position argues that we lose the uniqueness of the experience while looking for the commonality of the experience so by presenting singular narrative accounts of each of our participants we are trying to end up with a description of the life movement of a particular person, or in other words, their personal story. Goodson et al. (2010) illustrate this process in the book "Narrative learning", where they use individual chapters to present and discuss the re-storied narrative of each research participant in a way that is both simple and powerful.

For the second part of the data presentation, I will once again engage a Deweyan influenced lens of experience to explore further the resonant threads and possible

themes which have emerged from and across the stories as they present themselves in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. While my analysis was informed by the ideas of John Dewey in relation to experience, his paradigmatic framework did not serve as a dictum within the analysis. Instead I borrowed from some of the processes and ideas put forward by Grbich (2007), Goodson et al. (2010), Clandinin (2007, 2013) and Squire (2013). As Reissman (1993) has observed, narratives are not only situated within particular interactions but also within social, cultural and institutional discourses and these should not be omitted during the process of interpretation. Any tentativeness in a narrative approach stems from the idea that other interpretations may be taken from the same narrative. This chimes perfectly with Webster and Mertova's (2007) assertion that both context and culture influence our way of understanding and in turn our worldview will influence how we tell and understand our narrative, but also it will also influence how we look at, investigate and interpret a story.

The input to the research process on the part of the researcher and their use "of intuition in analysing and interpreting the narrative data" is something which Gill and Goodson (2011, p. 160) believe is commonly used by researchers but is seldom addressed by the literature. As they attest further "for some time, narrative researchers and life historians have tended to 'write themselves' into the research in order to acknowledge that research insights are the result of a fusion of voices, interactions and collaboration between those involved" (Gill and Goodson, 2011, p. 160). Through the process of narrative analysis (transcription, analysis and presentation) and the guiding principle of postmodernism and its focus on subjectivity and multiple truths, I have tried to bring to the fore the hidden values and views of the participants in a way

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that has made them explicit while also trying to ensure that the story was real and that their voices were heard and not lost.

3.5. Limitations of the Narrative Approach and this Study

All studies have their limitations and their potential for bias and many would argue that this is particularly true for narrative studies. Any study which involves human beings has a potential to do harm and I have already addressed some of these issues in the ethics section. The particular limitations of this study are firstly concerned with the methodological approach of narrative inquiry and secondly with the sampling approach used in this study. Both will be addressed now.

One of the main challenges of using narrative as a methodology concerns the issues of reliability and validity. The term reliability refers to the notion of replicability or stability in research, while the term validity refers to "the ability of research to reflect an external reality" or being able to measure what it is supposed to be measuring (Elliott, 2005, p. 22). Both these issues are difficult for qualitative researchers with scholars such as Maxwell (1992) and Eisner (1991) challenging the idea that validity, which they see as a realist notion of describing and defining truth, can be measured in this way in qualitative research. As Webster and Mertova (2007, p. 89) argue, more traditional approaches to research tend to be based on scientific methods, facts and processes, while narrative research is "more concerned with individual truths than identifying generalisable and repeatable events". Increasingly qualitative researchers have moved away from the term 'validity' and prefer instead to evaluate inquiry on "its trustworthiness or credibility". The concept of trustworthiness is conveyed through its persuasiveness, authenticity and plausibility (Riessman, 1993) and in turn

this is reinforced by a clear and coherent research process, an adherence to reflexivity and reflection, and a clear statement of how the researcher accounts for assumptions and bias (Butler-Kisber, 2010). For the same reasons above, it seems clear that reliability is an issue that cannot be "considered possible or desirable, as it undermines the very assumptions on which qualitative research is based" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 15). Many qualitative researchers including Polkinghorne (1988) and Riessman (2003) argue that narrative research should not be judged by the same criteria as those applied to more traditional and more broadly accepted qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Webster and Mertova, 2007).

The idea of generalizability in research also has its roots in the positivistic tradition where sample sizes tend to be large and where the adherence to clearly defined and prescribed procedures tends to rule out the possibility of results occurring by chance, therefore making the findings generalizable (Butler-Kisber, 2010). In qualitative research the sample sizes are usually smaller and "the varied, emergent and contextualised processes and 'results' rule out any willingness or attempt to claim that one situation can be generalized to another" (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p. 15). Thus the term generalizability as defined by the positivistic research tradition has probably little value in qualitative research and indeed some scholars argue that "particularizability" may be more valid as a term. Following on from this point, some would argue that probability sampling should be the gold standard for research and any other sample chosen deliberately would equate with convenience sampling. However, as Light et al. (1990; 2009) argue, purposeful sampling or purposive sampling (Palys, 2008) is simply another route to gathering a group of participants and is essential in qualitative studies particularly where information that is relevant to

your question and goals cannot be obtained elsewhere. Initially I attempted to attract a larger number of participants by targeting relevant institutions but the response was low and subsequently I employed a purposeful sampling method to identify individuals who had experience of the phenomenon under investigation and who would agree to share their experiences in interview.

It seems clear then that many of these so-called limitations or challenges of qualitative research are a throwback to an era where positivistic quantitative traditions dominated research. Some of the issues which perhaps should have more pertinence in qualitative research are the notions of trustworthiness and credibility, and transparency and researcher reflexivity. In this study, I have outlined a clear systematic process to show how I came to choose the research design which I hope will show transparency and allow the reader to access the rigor of the research. Furthermore, there is evidence that I adhered to and was guided by ethical practices.

There are some critics of studies which use retrospective methods, such as the life grid, based on accuracy of recall due to fading memories. However, there is some evidence to counter the accuracy of this charge with Squire (1989) for example arguing that recall may not be as inaccurate as is generally supposed since it has been shown that some information persists for a lifetime. Furthermore, it is true that all interview data and not just retrospective accounts will reflect the stories which respondents choose to tell and may be distorted by "the position of the teller and the importance with which he/she wishes to imbue particular occurrences" (Gill, p. 60). Furthermore as Blaxter and Paterson (1982) argue these concerns have tended to draw attention from the potential accuracy of the life grid method, particularly around life

events which are meaningful to the respondent. While narrative inquirers are attentive to both their participants and their possible audience when composing their research texts, it is the voices of the participants which are most influential in the final research texts and therefore it is to them that narrative researchers owe their fidelity and care (Connelly and Clandinin, 2000).

Finally I will attempt to address my positionality or reflexivity to account for any inherent biases and assumptions brought to this study.

3.6 Research Reflexivity and Positionality

Throughout this study, in an attempt to be transparent, I have shown why and how I came to choose narrative inquiry as my research design. Most research starts from a value laden perspective and in qualitative research it is often argued that the researcher should position themselves in their study by being upfront and honest about their personal values and biases, adopting a reflexive approach that is clearly articulated in their writing (Greenbank, 2003). In narrative research in particular it is usual for researchers to reflect on their own contribution to the collection and presentation of the experiences and stories of their participants. At every available opportunity I have actively engaged in this process of reflexivity: I made an initial consideration of the personal reasons for researching that particular phenomenon; acknowledged and discussed my own involvement in the interview process; and addressed my influence in the transcription of the tapes, the analysis of the data and the presentation of the findings. Furthermore, I have made an attempt to understand how this research process may have affected the research participants not only during the interview process but in the presentation of and possible dissemination of their

lived experiences. As Riessman (1993) informed us earlier, narrative research and storytelling don't assume objectivity rather they privilege positionality and reflexivity. One's subjectivity is not something that can be thrown off like a cloak. This research is not about revealing the truth of the stories instead it is an attempt to capture the essence of a life lived. It is inevitable that the analysis of the data will be determined by my research question, my epistemological position and by my own lived experience in relation to the research topic. But our positionality also affects how we perceive the research relationship and it should be said here that like Gill and Goodson (2011, p. 160-163) I believe "empathy, collaboration, dialogue and intersubjectivity are all important ingredients in the relationship" and recognise that the experience should be one of "reciprocal learning". As put forward so eloquently in their case study by Goodley and Runswick-Cole (cited in Wellington, 2015, p. 94) "research calls us into a kind of engagement with the wider social, political, cultural and economic background of the lives of the people we encounter. It is a story of knowing, not knowing, getting to know and then perhaps not knowing again". For me this was a process of finding out more about professional staff members like myself working in higher education while undertaking a doctorate, and saying something about their experiences.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have set out to explain the research design I have chosen to answer my research question. The literature describes many different approaches to using narrative inquiry as a research methodology and I have attempted to explain the journey I took and the process I followed to ultimately decide on a narrative inquiry approach which uses a Deweyan lens to focus on the voice and experiences of my

research participants. I have presented and explained my use of interviews and the life grid as methods of data collection; explained exactly how I went about the process of analysing the data; outlined the limitations of this study especially some concerns with regard to sampling; and presented the ethical considerations especially some of those issues which were particular to this study. Finally, it is very important in a narrative inquiry for the researcher to be upfront about their own personal values and biases and I have therefore offered an account of my own reflexivity and positionality.

The next chapter will analyse and discuss the findings from this narrative research study.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion
"What we find changes who we become"
(Peter Morville, 2005)

4. Introduction

In the words of Wellington (2015, p. 12) "educational research is ultimately concerned with people" and this particular narrative study recognises that when people tell stories about their own lives, they are not only providing us with an insight into their lived experiences but also into how they have made sense of their lives and worlds. As a child I was always delighted to visit the homes of family members or neighbours where people stopped by unannounced to visit and stayed longer than they had intended because the 'craic' was great and stories about neighbouring places, people and happenings were forthcoming. Everyone could feel part of that sense of community or belonging by simply listening in or sharing their own story or anecdote about something or someone living or dead from the neighbourhood. As a child I always had a sense that I understood less of the connotations and meanings than the adults in the company leading to various interpretations and understandings within the listening group. This shared act of telling and listening to stories has become an enduring feature of our family life with stories by and about family members who have since passed away being relayed (often embellished) to younger family members. Interestingly, I have encountered occasions when several members of the same family are both insistent that a particular event in their childhood happened to them.

Taylor (2008, p. 30) asserts when research participants share their stories and experiences and their "sense of who they are", they are doing it through collaborative acts of identity formation with the researcher and "they often speak in ways that belie

any overarching sense of indeterminacy, partiality and complexity in that formative process". For Polkinghorne (1988, p. 174) "narrative explanations are based on past facts" but "because these past 'facts' are not open to direct, present observation, they must be established on the basis of traces, for instance, documents, memos and personal memory". These traces of past events are the narrative researcher's data and they help uncover past events leading up to the phenomenon under investigation. As stated so eloquently:

> attending to the multiplicity of what becomes visible in the unfolding life, the narrative inquirer attends to the particularities of each "bit" or shard in order to compose multiple possible story retellings or ways to move forward in imaginative and narratively coherent ways.
>
> (Downey and Clandinin, 2010, p. 391)

4.1 Presenting the stories

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from my study and move forward in a way that is both imaginative and narratively coherent. When we set out to analyse our data it is with the intention to come to a greater understanding of the phenomenon under study. According to Hoad (1986) the German word for analysis is analusein, meaning to undo or unloosen and many interpretive methodologies talk about the process of unloosening the data by a process of reading and re-reading to uncover meaning behind the text. As previously discussed, I have, through an ongoing systematic process of reading, re-reading, reflecting and annotating, systematically searched for the individual's experience of the phenomenon under investigation hoping to capture their unique history while also looking for themes, patterns, similarities and differences across and within the transcripts and the life grids, in an attempt to unloosen the data, keeping my research question and associated sub-questions always as my focus. Polkinghorne, in conversation with Clandinin and Murphy (2007, p. 633), has said that narrative inquiry for him is a different kind of

knowledge, "a knowledge of the particular, the unique, the development rather than a kind of abstractive common concept". Mindful of Atkinson's (2005, p. 4) assertion that too often interview-derived narratives are taken at face-value by researchers to "produce a version of social inquiry which is devoid of social organisation", I have presented my interpretation of the meaning behind the words trying to stay as close to Clandinin's (2013) description of narrative inquiry as possible by reflecting the narrative quality of the experiences of the participants and showing how their stories are embedded in and shaped by their different social, institutional, familial or cultural contexts. Even the most personal stories of experience will display generic properties which can be associated with shared cultural scripts and conventions.

> Narrative is an important genre of spoken action and representation in everyday life, and in many specialised contexts. We should, therefore, be studying narrative insofar as it is a particular feature of a given cultural milieu. Furthermore, narratives are not independent of cultural conventions and shared formats. They are not uniquely biographical or autobiographical materials, and they certainly do not convey unmediated private "experience".
> (Atkinson, Delamont and Housley, 2007, p. 38)

Furthermore, Atkinson et al (2005, p. 38) argue that "experiences, memories, emotions and other apparently personal or private states are constructed and enacted through culturally shared narrative types, formats, and genres. They are related to story types more generally". The institutional narrative of schooling for example is visible across all the narrative accounts as the participants tell us about their early educational experiences attending national and secondary catholic state schools in Ireland.

Narrative inquirers strive to attend to the way in which stories are constructed, asking how they were made and for whom. They ask about the cultural discourses stories draw upon and what they take for granted so it becomes clear that narrative inquiry is

more than the uncritical gathering of stories (Riessman and Speedy, 2007). Clandinin (2013, p. 206) has stated "as we play with field texts, shaping them by laying them alongside other texts, playing across temporality, place and the personal and social, different aspects of storied experiences become visible".

4.2 Presenting the research participants

Each research participant we interview is in the midst of their lives and they have a unique perspective of the phenomenon under study. There is no one way to compose research texts (Clandinin, 2013). By analysing the data in the way I have chosen, I have come to know something about the experiences of my research participants "without claiming to know everything" (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005, p. 961). As I have explained in the preceding chapters I have used narrative inquiry as my methodology for studying the lived experiences of my research participants and as a result narrative is both the methodology and the phenomenon under investigation. I have collected qualitative data from my five participants through interview and life grid methods employing an experience-centred narrative approach which has at its core a Deweyan view of experience which has framed the inquiry space and created a lens with which to analyse the data. This approach as put forward by Connelly and Clandinin (2006) assumes that experience is the phenomenon under study and is the starting point for any narrative inquirer. Taking Dewey's second criterion of experience, that of continuity and linking it to the narrative inquiry dimension of temporality they have interpreted it as drawing attention to the way in which "the past, present, and future of people, places, things, and events are interrelated" or "always in temporal transition, always on the way, in the making" (Clandinin et al., 2016). However, a narrative inquiry does not just interpret experience as an immediate

source of knowledge and insight but also as "an exploration of the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individual's experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, pp. 42-43) so the analysis will adopt a more socially and culturally directed research framework while interpreting individual stories of experience.

4.3 Presenting the data

I have presented the data in two ways. Firstly I have attempted to make visible different aspects of individual experience by presenting a storied account of each research participant using their own words as illustration. In these narratives, which are all concerned with the individual's early educational experiences and also aspects of their private and professional lives as they have influenced their decision to undertake a doctoral qualification, I have presented the data in each account as it was told to me while also attempting to ground that experience temporally. These accounts may be found in Appendix A. When we present singular accounts through narrative inquiry, we do it to show insights into the everyday real life of our participants. In conversation with Clandinin and Murphy (2007, p. 633) Polkinghorne claimed that narrative inquiry is less about looking for themes that are common across people and more about "the uniqueness and personal history as the thing that makes up human beings". This position argues that we lose the uniqueness of the experience while looking for the commonality of the experience so by presenting singular narrative accounts of each of our participants we are trying to end up with a description of the life movement of a particular person, or in other words, their personal story.

In the first presentation of the data, I have introduced the narrative accounts (personal story) of each participant. As I continued to read and re-read the transcripts and life grid contributions, I could see that similar threads and patterns and a diversity of insights *can* be seen weaving in and out and across the narrative accounts. The question of power and its working across individual lives, and also the constructions of identity can be seen clearly in each of the narrative accounts. I refer again to Polkinghorne in his conversations with Clandinin and Murphy (2007) when he says that he looks at narrative from a philosophical perspective. He explains that he encourages his students to produce individual case study narrative life stories but often they will choose to do a final chapter which comments on the narratives or focuses on similarities or differences between the accounts. I have taken his sage advice in the presentation of my data because I felt strongly that I wanted to look more closely at some of the plots weaving in and through the narratives.

While a narrative inquirer does not have direct access to experience as such, they can, as Denzin (2000) notes, study it through its representations and through the way the stories are told. Therefore, for the second presentation of data I explored those representations and re-examined the data, perhaps looking more closely at some of those emerging threads and patterns, to present it in a different way and possibly with a different interpretation. An experienced-centred narrative approach is again employed to frame the inquiry space and analyse the data. In particular, I have utilised Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conceptualization of narrative inquiry as a relational inquiry process within a three dimensional narrative inquiry space. This approach recognises that experience is always more than we can know and will always, no matter how faithful the representation, involve selective emphasis of our experience.

A narrative inquiry does not then interpret experience as an immediate source of knowledge and insight, but aims instead to explore social, cultural and institutional narratives because it is within these contexts that the narrative inquirer believes the individual's experiences are 'constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted' (Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, pp. 42-43). Clandinin et al. (2000, p. 443) have stated that when we have analysed our interview data and have looked for resonant threads and then represented our participants through the narrative accounts, we are "freezing individual lives in motion". Long after this study is complete my research participants will continue to make sense of their own lives. Their lives will still be in motion and they may offer different interpretations of their early educational experiences or their reasons for undertaking a doctorate in education.

I have not deliberately employed a ranking system to present any of the emerging themes but it is possible that some of those themes which appear first may have been more obvious to me on the initial reading of the transcripts and therefore it is also possible that they are themes which I was expecting to encounter within the data. As Polkinghorne (1995) has suggested, it is a complex process where often it is only retrospectively that we come to understand and give meaning to events. I should make clear that these themes are my interpretation of the experiences under study and my interpretation will in turn be influenced by my own life experiences and narrative. All interviews began in the same way, with a broad and non-specific question designed to elicit stories about the participants' personal lived experiences of education. As Riessman (2008) has observed narratives invite the reader to respectfully enter the perspective of the narrator and get close to their experiences. I have attempted to re-present not re-create the experiences of the participants and in so doing, hope that I

have been successful in describing their lives as they have experienced the phenomenon under study. (Please refer to Appendix A for part 1 of the presentation of findings: narrative accounts of the participants).

4.4 Introducing the themes and sub-themes

For Part 2 of the presentation of findings, six main themes have been identified. They are present across all the narratives and within those themes a further twenty-four plot threads have been identified. The table below shows these clearly. The themes are derived from the data and my resulting analysis of it. The main themes are illustrated using the voices and words of my five participants and are referenced back to my interpretation of the relevant literature.

Table 1: Main themes and sub-themes

Main Themes	Sub-themes
Experiences of Education	Dropout of college Injustice of education Being top of the class Familial influences and associations with education
Motivations for Undertaking a Doctorate in Education	Credibility Dropout of college Peer and institutional pressure Professional development Personal ambition and interest in the research area
Relationships	Collaboration Invisibility Identity Discord
Identity	Being a professional Labelling Identity in third level institutions

	Third space
	Being a female in HE
Support Network	Familial support
	Peer support
	Institutional support
	Financial support
The Doctoral Journey	Being a doctor: doctoral identity
	The doctorate versus the PhD

4.5 Theme 1: Experiences of education

I began every interview with an open-ended and non-specific question where I invited the research participants to tell me about their experiences of education. Interestingly all but one of the participants immediately started to talk in a temporal way covering earlier experiences of education starting from primary school through to secondary, third level and beyond, while the remaining participant spoke about their professional life in higher education and the origins of their career path before then referring back to their educational experiences from primary through to third level education. Although there wasn't a single, unifying story, it became clear that there were several sub-themes running throughout their narratives which were not only associated with the main theme but which also crossed over into other main themes. I have classified the sub-themes as: (a) drop out and dissatisfaction with college; (b) being top of the class; (c) the injustice of education; (d) familial influences and association with education.

4.5.1. Sub-theme A: drop-out and dissatisfaction with college

This sub-theme resonated across two of the narrative accounts and a similar thread was discernible across a further two narrative accounts. It was also linked to two other main themes - motivation for undertaking a doctorate in education and relationships

with other professionals within the workplace. Past experiences are seen to shape the choices and motivations of some of the participants particularly those who believe that they have somehow failed to progress in what they see as a more traditional journey through primary, secondary and third level education. Leonard et al. (2005) found evidence of this in their study particularly the idea that participants were somehow proving to themselves that they were able to undertake a doctorate. Two of my participants had dropped out of more than four courses each at or beyond third level. Another participant knew she had chosen the wrong course but stuck with it, gained her qualification and then became frustrated at the choices it gave her in her professional life. She continued on this path but continually chose to study additional educational qualifications in the same field to try and change her trajectory in a higher education career. A fourth participant revealed in his life grid, a prominent gap in both his education and career path which wasn't explained adequately through the grid or during the interview. When I questioned him on this gap during our joint completion of the life grid, he told me, almost as an afterthought, that he had dropped out of seminary school where he had been training to become a priest. As these particular participants reflected on their early experiences of education, they revealed that they had often found themselves making decisions in their lives which have since impacted or shaped their life stories.

It is an interesting part of narrative inquiry, and often a contested one, this decision by participants to reveal certain aspects of their biography. Linked to this tension between biography and history is the idea of structure and agency. Bathmaker and Harnett (2010, p. 131) frame it as a question "how much are our lives 'determined by structures' (such as education) and to what extent can we ourselves 'make things

happen'?" Furthermore they ask what agency or means do we have to accommodate or resist these structures and "to what extent can we move beyond that which may restrict our choices and constrict our lives". I refer back to the literature review and the idea of a communitarian concept of identity where the identity of individual agents is both distinctive and embedded and where the defining community, (family life, culture and community), functions as a moral space and additionally provides the language in which individuals make sense of and interpret their world (Taylor, 1989; Henkel, 2000).

Sonya's narrative, for example, described how she dropped out of college early and continued this pattern for a decade without really appreciating or fully understanding its significance for her. As she says in her narrative:

> I think I failed most of my first year exams, switched to Arts, I did English, French and Philosophy, again enjoyed the reading but didn't enjoy the application and then dropped out at the end of that first year.

Sonya was very bright in primary school and on her teacher's recommendation, skipped her sixth class in primary school, entering secondary school a year earlier than her peers. At secondary school she recognised that she was losing her academic drive and enthusiasm so she then changed schools, took her leaving certificate qualifications early and left school when she had just turned 17. She subsequently began and dropped out of, or switched from, eight separate courses ranging from further educational courses to several undergraduate degrees. During the course of her interview Sonya frequently draws attention to her lack of commitment to the many courses she started but didn't finish and yet, by the end of the interview she has, through a process of interpretative reflection, developed a sense of ownership of the

experiences she has had, shaped largely by the decisions she took and paths she didn't choose. These stories are the fundamental linkage across our lives and as Ochs and Capps (1996, p. 21) describe it, "our lives are the pasts that we tell ourselves" so through our stories "we indicate who we have been, who we are and who we wish to become" (Andrews, 2000, p. 78). At several points Sonya asks out loud:

> No, let's see, how many courses did I start?

And:

> So I gave that up as well, so how many courses, so yeah so this is already a little bit of a pattern in not finishing courses.

> I was so regretful or maybe even ashamed to a certain extent of not having pursued a particular path and feeling that I was not quite at the level of others.

We see how, at the time of interview Mary was working towards the final submission of her doctorate in education and was on target for completion, but had, over the course of her life, started and dropped out of two PhDs and one Masters. As she says of her PhD experience:

> It's not the right model for me, you know, I'm not the lonely scholar.

Mary also refers throughout her interview to her dissatisfaction with her early school experiences and then later, her higher education experiences. She drops out of the Masters because she has "no money no interest. Not the right topic or supervisor".

The career trajectories of all these participants and their subsequent decision to undertake a doctorate in education, were shaped by decisions taken earlier in their lives. It is useful to take into consideration here the idea of "schools as places and spaces of life and learning" particularly the way the participants have continued to

make sense of their early educational experiences long after they have left school (Clandinin et al, 2010, p. 447). For Andrews (2000) it is these stories of our experiences which are the cornerstone of our identity and she argues that human agency is the key to understanding how individual life histories are formulated in specific social and political contexts. Sonya dropped out of college numerous times so what does this tell us about her fractured relationship with university or learning or the course she chose? Or does it tell us something about the people she knew, the friendships she made, or her relationship with her family? At one stage in the interview she tells us that during her school years she lost her academic groove but her parents didn't really notice and she refers to a lack of discipline at home. Most of the participants project a happy supportive family background where education was supported and yet all encounter and have to navigate social, institutional and cultural narratives in some shape or other. Siobhan, for example, tells us that despite having a good qualification and a position as a teacher, she had idolised and then followed her sister into her chosen career and in hindsight this was probably not the right choice for her. She felt unsatisfied and stymied as a young woman in her career as a primary school teacher and felt that she had very few career options.

> I ended up in primary teaching anyway got through the course without any difficulty whatsoever, that wasn't a problem but I suppose I was teaching, within the first year of teaching I kind of very quickly decided it wasn't really where I kind of felt at 20 I wanted to be. I was out to grass you know that was it, what progression was there? What else could I do? Nothing really, because, you know, you are not taken seriously as a vice-principal or principal really until you are kind of in your 40s or 50s. Nobody is going to hire a 20 year old as a principal unless it is a one-teacher school in the middle of absolutely nowhere like, so, at 20 there was nothing else to do. So that was when I decided I'd go on and do my Masters.

4.5.2. Sub-theme B: injustice of education

The idea of an unjust education system resonated very strongly in Mary's narrative but also touched upon Siobhan, Sonya and Patrick's narrative accounts. Mary from an early age was very conscious of the injustice in the school yard. In particular she refers to several instances involving children who are treated badly by the teachers, nuns, priests and other children. She talks about the importance of how you spoke in school and if you and your parents didn't speak well you were treated differently. She mentions how her own parents wouldn't have tolerated any abuse towards her and her sibling so they were protected whereas other children who didn't have a parent who could stand up to the teachers weren't treated well. Mary demonstrates here an awareness of her own social positioning and individual agency (Tomlinson, 2013). She tells a particular tale of a young girl paraded and humiliated by the nuns because her parents weren't in a position to buy the child the appropriate religious head covering for church.

> I just sort of found that education tends to be incredibly narrow and right wing in this country. It always has been and always will be. It wasn't an equal space, you know, it really, really wasn't.

> That was the biggest lesson I learned because it was what was missing. There was no sense of equality in the classrooms that I grew up in, absolutely none.

Throughout her interview Mary gave numerous examples of how the formal primary and secondary education system and wider society in Ireland was unjust and she gives numerous examples to illustrate this belief. She talks about children being forced to leave school at fourteen, of a lack of social awareness in the school, and of corporal punishment in the classroom. She talks about a very old nun teaching her class of 72 pupils for 3 years before the class was split.

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> In the early days you know, there were outside toilets, I mean this is where we were coming from. There was no such thing as a child with special needs because they didn't get to school.

She gives the example of when her mother told the rate collector that she was going to university and how his reply was typical of the sexist and unequal society that she believed Ireland was then:

> I mean when my mother told the rate collector, you have probably never experienced a rate collector, but the rate collector used to come round once a year, my mother told him that I was going to university, the same as my brother and he said 'what would you want sending a girl to university, sure what's she going to do only get married and have babies', so that's the world I'm coming from.

Patrick describes how for him, working in higher education is a privilege and he states that he believes in Nelson Mandela's mantra that education is the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the world. He explains that for him the month of November and its graduation ceremonies is particularly moving for him, especially because of those who are first generation university entrants and those who have had a second chance at education. For Patrick it is the "human story" in education and the privilege of meeting the families which is important to him. Interestingly Patrick doesn't elaborate about his own human story and educational background but it is clear that he empathises with those who have come through higher education and are using it to change their world. This in itself is interesting because we can see from Patrick's own story and those of the other five participants that they too have all come back into education at later stages of their lives for their own distinct reasons but motivated by wanting to change something in their own world or narrative.

Sonya also alludes to the injustice of education when she cites an example at school of how boys and girls were treated differently in the classroom. She explains how she

worked hard at school but was thwarted in her attempts to do science by a rule at the

school that required girls to do home economics while boys were allowed to do the

science subjects. Even as a teenager she recognised that this was discriminatory. As

she says:

> The school that I was in was very small and what they were doing,
> because it was co-ed, they were requiring girls then, for the Leaving
> Cert, to take home economics and the boys did science subjects so
> they were allowed to do biology, chemistry and physics. This was
> 1979 and at the age of fifteen I thought this was outrageous that they
> are forcing me to do home economics. I really liked it, I really enjoyed
> it but I didn't want to do it for the Leaving Cert so I asked my parents
> if I could leave and go to another school. They agreed to that.

For Sonya the choice was clear, she could leave and go to another school and she

knew her parents would support her in her decision but for other children in her

school this would not have been an option. We see again the power of social

positioning. Sonya not only recognises the unjust and discriminatory rule but is able

to challenge these capital forms by exercising her agency thereby changing her

circumstances and therefore her narrative (Henkel, 2010).

Although Siobhan's primary school education had not been happy and she "wouldn't

look back and say they were the best days of my life by any stretch of the

imagination" she goes on to follow her teacher into primary school teaching. She

doesn't clearly identify the reason for her own unhappiness at primary school, but

does allude to the teaching and some of the small town practices that existed in

education at that time.

While Mary refers in her interview to sexism and inequality during her early formal

education she also refers to the level of sexism which presently exists in her own third

level institution and makes clear that she believes that the institution is "getting more and more sexist as the years go by". She refers at several points in her interview to a major restructuring in her organisation which had profoundly impacted her work, leaving her in a position where she now retains little of her previous areas of responsibility 'now I do none of them, got restructured" and where she is "miserable and lonely and deeply offensive but I am the breadwinner, I have a retired husband and a son who is twenty two years of age and therefore entitled to nothing in his own right until he is twenty five". She also alludes on several occasions to encountering sexism when she went after particular positions stating that "my face didn't fit" and "they didn't want me to take it". She further states:

> There are lots of things I think that contribute to not being valued in a place and I think being female is one of them, you know, you often sort of say to yourself, God, if you are female they think secretary and they don't value secretaries.

> If you are female they think secretary and sure secretaries don't cost much, I'm sure they don't think that explicitly but in their hearts they do.

When I asked Mary at the end of her interview to tell me what had been the standout experience for her in her experiences of education and her pursuit of a doctoral qualification she immediately answered that for her "equality is absolutely the thing that I have learned, the most important thing" and additionally she thought that "all the sort of experiences where equality was much offended against are also important".

4.5.3. Sub-theme C: being top of the class

It became clear early on in most of the interviews that I was interviewing very bright people who had shone at school. Three of the participants referred to their academic achievements in the classroom, being "top of the class" or "always coming first in the class" and "first place in one of the most competitive group in years". Of those three, two dropped out of several undergraduate and postgraduate courses over a period of time. The other three participants persisted continually in education completing several postgraduate qualifications before starting their doctorate. The question here is why two participants who started out in primary school and continued through secondary school as top of the class or brightest in the class went on to drop out of college on more than one occasion. Neither were first generation university entrants and both report a supportive, while not particularly affluent home life. When probed initially they both talk about being bored or not stimulated or being discontent about particular issues in the school relating to injustice or discrimination. As the interviews progress though other more personal family issues emerge and we can see a pattern develop particularly in Sonya's narrative. The participants chose to tell the part of their biography which reveals clues to their learner identity. As Bathmaker (2010) comments, narrative inquirers focus on individual lives and they become concerned with the construction and enacting of identity/ies. This is important because identities not only shape people's practices but it allows others to understand them and act toward them in particular ways depending on such understandings (McCarthey and Moje, 2002).

Interestingly two participants initially veered away from what could be considered to be the natural educational trajectory for them, coming from a background where they

were not the first university entrants in their family. In this respect, narrative research provides both opportunities and space to allow participants to negotiate their identities, while making sense of their experiences and exploring their individual agency and its place in their story. Sonya for example is very clear in her own mind that she was somehow "failing" or "not at the level of others" or "on the back foot relative to her peers" when she didn't complete her initial higher education choices and she refers consistently to being "frustrated" and "not challenged" and "regretful". She is also emphatic that her choice to do a doctorate was to prove to herself that she *could* do it. She talks about being given a voice in the workplace after completing her first degree as a mature student which boosted her confidence and added to her thirst for learning. Indeed, during the interview she seems to make peace with her path through life and articulates a desire to be less regretful and more comfortable with her choices.

4.5.4. Sub-theme D: familial influences and associations with education

Throughout all of the accounts there is mention of family sometimes in terms of support, or influences on their chosen career, and also previous associations with university. Mary is clear that if she had been the first person in her family to go to university, she wouldn't have gone. This previous association with university in her family meant that there was always the expectation that she would attend university herself so while she follows that predetermined path she also appears to challenge the established narrative. Recognising the lack of inequality in the school yard and Irish society at large she seems disappointed with her early formal education and later with most of her higher educational experiences.

Siobhan followed her older sister into teaching in primary education and quickly realised that it was not the natural career path for her. She wonders aloud if nursing or dentistry may have shaped her life differently. As a young girl of seven she was very influenced by her older sister whom she idolised and she decided then that she wanted to be a teacher just like her sister. By continually repeating as a child that she wanted to be a primary school teacher, it became accepted that Siobhan was going to be a teacher and so the idea stuck and her route was determined. She now recognises that it was a forced journey for her and she made several attempts to then change her career path by pursuing other qualifications. Her parents had not gone to university but were strongly supportive of all educational endeavours among their children.

Patrick tells us that he feels privileged with his role in higher education and how he is particularly struck by those first generation learners who didn't succeed in formal education and who come back to college for a second chance and attend graduation day with their families.

All of the participants mention the support of their families and friends throughout their doctoral journey. Siobhan makes clear that her husband was very supportive of her decision to job share which would not only allow her more time at home with her children but also give her time to work on her doctorate. This support also extended to financial support which enabled her to occasionally send the children to crèche for a few hours on those days she was off work to allow her additional time for writing. As she says "if you have a partner it's not going to happen at home unless there is support there so yeah, that took a lot".

Davina too talks about the challenge of doing the doctorate in terms of how tough it was working full time and having small children. She explains that you are "literally stealing time wherever you go, early mornings, late nights, giving up things, not going on holidays or turning down invitations". She says that she has always felt supported by her family but even when you are supported it is very difficult and it is hard for people who haven't done a doctorate to really understand. As she says you are spreading yourself so thinly and there probably comes a time where people are going:

> God will it ever end? No more than you feel it yourself, will it ever end, you know? Yeah, I felt supported but I would say like that you make huge sacrifices, you know, and I have made huge sacrifices to get this over the line. Even my young children like and they are only six and four like would know what a thesis is, they would know what it looks like you know, because it was taking me away from them.

Davina talks later on about how she hopes that this will have an influence on her children in a positive way and that they will go "wow, mum is a doctor" and that they will take from it that it is possible to be a mother and work full-time but also pursue higher educational qualifications "because it is hard and as a woman you do feel it". This area of family support is also a main theme and I will explore it further later in the chapter.

4.6 Theme 2: Motivations for undertaking a doctoral qualification

This was the main question posed at interview and some of the resulting motivations were identified directly by the participants and then further verified by their personal narratives. Indeed the participants tended to give more than one answer and often addressed the question several times throughout their interview. Although five distinct themes emerged many of the answers were broadly similar and there were overlaps between them which were also of importance, for example, some participants cited

both personal ambition and peer pressure linking it specifically to a previous drop out of college while others felt peer pressure from other professionals at work which challenged their own credibility. While there is limited literature about why professional staff in third level institutions who are not considered to be academic teaching staff undertake doctorates, some of the motivations below are validated by other voices in the literature looking at doctoral study motivation in general (Scott et al., 2004; Wellington, 2013) . Other studies such as Wellington and Sikes (2006) and Burgess et al. (2011) have all identified deeply held personal motivations for doctoral study. The five sub-themes identified in this study were: (a) credibility (b) dropout of college, (c) peer and institutional pressure, (d) professional development (e) personal ambition and interest in the research area.

4.6.1. Sub-theme A: credibility

I was not surprised to find that this sub-theme resonated across all of the narrative interviews. Scott at al. (2004) identified both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators for those undertaking doctoral study and they categorised credibility along with personal fulfilment as being an intrinsic motivator for those candidates already well established in their career. While two participants directly state credibility as their main motivation to doing a doctorate, the other three allude to this during the course of their interview. There is a crossover between this sub-theme and peer pressure but they are also very distinct sub-themes. Davina makes it clear that she wants to be at the table with the same qualification as everyone else. She also believes that with the doctorate she will "probably end up being perceived differently".

> I hope I was right in my initial reasons when you'll have the currency and then it's yours and nobody can take it away and you did the hard work and you are at the table and you are as good as anyone in terms of a qualification so I think all of that stuff probably comes to bear.

And in truth I felt at that point which is ten years ago that it was becoming a real currency in higher education and if you were to continue to be sitting at tables with people and on committees and boards I often found myself being one of the few people in the room without a doctoral qualification. I used to feel, you know, that, the absence of it and I wanted to be at the table and to have it like everyone else in the room.

Patrick meanwhile directly references credibility as his primary reason for pursuing a doctorate in education.

The main reason is that I feel at this stage, I mean I am permanent here, so it wasn't related to job, to I suppose, maintaining a job. However, I feel that for credibility in the role that I am in was one reason. Secondly, it was something that I mean I had put on the long finger for a number of years and kept saying I will come back and revisit.

Where we as an institution are moving and hope to move it would have had an impact on that level. Also I think in terms of you know, dealing with external stakeholders and industry collaborations. I think it gives a little bit more credibility to the conversation, to the partnership when you know, people look at titles.

Siobhan too reveals that she didn't want to be the only one in her unit who didn't have a doctorate.

Everyone in there bar one has a doctorate so I think had I not done it I think it would have had more effect on my life. Maybe how I felt about my role, I feel on a par academically with everyone else that I work with and I think if you feel on a par I think academically you are, what's the word I am trying to say, you have confidence in what you are doing, do you know what I mean? Whereas would you feel a bit of a fraud if you were in there with a Master's and everyone else around you had doctorates and you were doing the same role you know, would you feel like I suppose, you'd be under huge pressure to do one then wouldn't you at that point?

Siobhan had originally considered doing a doctorate at the end of her Master's but her project had fallen apart several times and she was so burnt out at that stage she turned her back on studying for a while and decided to concentrate on getting a job. When

she started working in higher education a colleague at the same level registered for an EdD and so Siobhan began to revisit the idea, primarily because she felt that if she was in the same role as someone and they had a PhD then she "can't just sit back and do nothing". I will revisit some of her further motivations under the theme of peer pressure.

4.6.2 Sub-theme B: dropout of college

This sub-theme came through in the previous theme 'experiences of education' but was sufficiently present in the narratives in the discussion around doctoral motivations that it seemed important to include it here. This was an interesting finding and as mentioned previously, echoes the idea that biography and past experiences influence the choices we make in our future (Leonard et al., 2005; Wellington and Sikes, 2006). Additionally it chimes with Dewey's (1938) notion of interaction and continuity where past experiences are in interaction with our present situations to create present experiences. In their narratives some of my participants show how they used the "social, cultural, academic and economic capital" they possessed to gain an advantage when their education system let them down, thereby altering the outcome (Wellington and Sikes, 2006). Although only one of the participants directly identifies drop out of college as being a motivator for pursuing a doctorate, another participant alludes to non-completion of two previous doctorates as being a motivating factor. Sonya makes it clear that it was certainly a factor in her decision to go back to college to do a degree many years after dropping out of two separate degrees and then continuing to drop out of other subsequent courses. She reveals her competitive urge to do better than others in her primary and secondary school class and we hear how she is formatted to seek recognition for her work and feels "needy". She explains that in her

current work situation she has to work harder than others to be considered on the same footing. Throughout the interview she expresses both frustration and regret at not continuing her initial degree and as a result she always felt on the "back foot" relative to her peers and it was this she feels which motivated her thirst for knowledge and also a determination to prove to herself that she could do it.

> Dropping out of college I mean that has been a major impact.

Throughout her interview Sonya reveals that she felt stymied by her lack of progression in life and she explains that during school and college she "academically let things slide"; she "started to become more of a social animal"; she gained "an okay Leaving Cert"; and she "lost the academic groove". She reprimands herself constantly about her then unwillingness to do anything about her situation and offers some excuses.

> So I got a job with them, again it was secretarial, again I was kind of tearing my hair out you know, frustrated, not really knowing you know.

> It would have actually been really hard studying law through French but you know, maybe I would have done it if I'd stayed! I didn't! I came home.

> So it was all very alien to the world I was living in, I didn't finish that course.

She decided to do the doctorate in education and explains "I needed to prove to myself I could do it". Her lack of progression through her undergraduate degree and subsequent degrees and other courses followed her until she felt compelled to prove to herself that she could do it and it also ignited a need to "challenge myself as well". It is clear that Sonya is using the doctorate to both challenge her identity and make structural changes to it (Wellington and Sikes, 2006).

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We heard earlier that Mary didn't complete her two earlier doctorates and had also dropped out of a previous postgraduate course. While she initially says that she did the education doctorate for herself, she also says "I just wanted to do it". She compares the subject matter of all three doctorates and it becomes clear that earlier attempts to do the PhD were half-hearted and in this case she has chosen a subject that she is particularly interested in because she wants to achieve the title, although as she says:

> I will be able then to say no I don't want a title which I say already and the difference will be that the title will be Dr Mary Fogarty rather than Ms Mary Fogarty and I still don't want a title.

4.6.3 Sub-theme C: peer and institutional pressure

Several studies talk about the tensions and frictions inherent in undertaking a doctoral degree and which continue post-completion (Baker and Pifer, 2015; Burgess et al., 2011). Once again this sub-theme played across several of the narrative accounts. Davina, Patrick and Siobhan make it clear that they felt under pressure from their institutions and also their peers to undertake a doctoral qualification. Patrick reveals that his institution are aiming to become a technological university and as part of the application for that status the institution is required to have a particular percentage of staff with PhDs. As he explains:

> and so we are obviously aiming as an institution to hit the metrics, so within that context I think it is difficult for me in my role to encourage others, as in staff, to undertake one if I don't lead the way myself.

Servage (2009) has previously suggested that doctoral students are not necessarily "choosing" to go back into education but are instead surviving in the labour market and in Patrick's reasoning we see clearly the idea that the doctorate will yield both social and economic dividends not just for himself but for his institution which is

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aiming to upgrade its status to a university. He chooses a subject which he thinks will help him as a leader and manager and also clearly states that he can't be in his role and encouraging others to undertake doctoral degrees if he himself hasn't got a doctorate. These tensions especially surrounding the economic usefulness of the doctorate have been noted by several studies and include personal issues such as financial concerns, student status, time to completion and post-completion issues such as employment opportunities and goals (Burgess et al. 2011; Baker and Pifer, 2015). Patrick admits that it was difficult to take on something additional on top of his role and responsibilities but also mentions the fact that others in his institution had recently opted to do an EdD in the UK and so he decided to follow their example, even though, as he reveals below, he thinks that qualifications are overrated. Burgess et al. (2011) have referred to some significant aspects of undertaking and completing professional doctorates such as identity, workplace tensions and self-development and elements of these issues are apparent in Patrick's narrative. Additionally he says:

> So I think that sometimes qualifications are overrated. And I think as I said that you need to apply a particular skill set to a particular post in line with what's needed and look at the overall picture. But then the contradiction and the other corollary of that, is that at the same time I think you would have credibility in certain scenarios and you know, people will look at the qualifications, the PhD, particularly around management and management that span so called academia with administration and I think that (having the doctorate) can only help.

Davina also talks about being at the table with others and feeling pressure to have the same qualification as others. As she says 'you are perceived differently' and 'I used to feel you know, the absence of it and I wanted to be at the table and to have it like everyone else in the room' and again, "I felt, that it was the currency that we were trading in and by not having it, you know, it would be better to have it than not have it". She goes on to talk about being a librarian in higher education and in order to be

taken seriously as a professional it is important to report into the bigger circle that everyone is part of and to situate library and information science into the bigger educational context, "your international context and your national context". Burgess et al. (2011) have referred to the "border crossing" between academia and the professional workplace for those undertaking a professional doctorate. We can see in Davina's story some elements of that friction where her values, identity and professionalism are constantly being challenged by the need to contribute to the academic debate and literature beyond her own profession of librarianship (Burgess et al., 2011). In Davina's narrative we also see elements of what Boud and Tennant (2006) suggest is a central consideration of those undertaking a doctorate and that is the desire for personal satisfaction, acknowledgement and recognition for her achievement, she wants to be like everyone else in the room.

Siobhan too felt influence from her peers as part of her decision to undertake a doctorate. While she had considered doing a PhD before, she didn't really take the idea seriously until suddenly one of her peers who worked in close proximity with her was accepted to do an EdD.

> God she is doing it, if she can do it I can do it, why am I not doing it? I had that funny notion that I laugh at it now but I had that funny notion that EdD isn't as good as a PhD anyway. I want PhD after my name not EdD and decided well right she is doing the EdD so I'll start considering the PhD route. I'll do something different my own way.

> I think if Yvonne hadn't registered for the EdD, I don't know if it would have brought back up the thoughts I had had a couple of years beforehand. I think after doing two masters in a row again, I was so knackered and wiped that I said I'm not doing anything again for a long time you know and it was a couple of years before I registered for something again but had she not registered it could even have been longer but then I feel if I had gotten married I don't know if I would have taken it on.

Siobhan makes clear at several junctures throughout her interview that she felt compelled and under pressure to apply for a doctorate because everyone in her work group had either a PhD or a doctorate. She talks about being confident in her role and being on a par academically with everyone else that she works alongside and then admits that if she hadn't achieved her doctorate she would feel a fraud and it would have had more effect on her role. Furthermore she refers to several statements "directives from on high" that have come from higher administration in the institution about her department and how they should be in a position to supervise PhD students and there is also talk of getting an EdD up and running.

> Publications yes, we are always being told you need to be publishing, you need to be doing this kind of stuff, again, it is just getting the time to do it.

> There is certainly a pressure to get involved in the research side of things which is interesting then because you are still classed as admin and HR will tell you and the Union will tell you that admin cannot do academic work, can't supervise students, can't lecture, blah de blah, but the institute wants you to do that stuff but at the same time they have no intention of reclassifying your contract. I'm sure that is everywhere.

4.6.4 Sub-theme D: professional development

Not surprisingly, professional development was cited by all of the participants as a motivator for their doctoral studies. While none of the participants felt that a doctorate was required by their institution as such, they all felt that it would somehow be useful or desirable within their work contexts. Leonard et al. (2005) found in their study that although many of their respondents cited professional development it wasn't first on their list of reasons and where it was the predominant reason, they found that those respondents had chosen the doctorate specifically for career advancement or for reasons of credibility within new posts.

Siobhan tells us that she felt under pressure from her peers to undertake a doctoral qualification but also felt that she needed to do it in terms of her own professional development.

> So then Yvonne said she was doing it, then, really I said, like, I have to do something. I can't just sit back and do nothing. We are in the same role ok and you do start to think well if one person in the same role as you is getting on and upping their educational stakes and you're not, what if promotion comes up? What if jobs come up? What if this project comes to an end and you are out the door, what do you do then? And you start realising you need to be on the same level as the other people that you are around and I suppose those in the office would have had or been doing doctorates at the time. Samuel had a doctorate, Geraldine had a doctorate, Yvonne is doing one as well, it did put pressure on me to knuckle down and say right you have to do something. So that would have been why, so, when I had thought about it years earlier, that was why I came to deciding on the EdD.

While Patrick admits to a difficulty around the idea of the qualification always fitting the position, he admits that within his institution there were others doing the EdD and he felt that it would bring something to the table for him when dealing with external stakeholders. Additionally he felt that there was an expectation that managers and administrators in higher education should have a doctorate and for this reason he felt it would be important for the advancement of his career to have the qualification.

As Head of Library and Information Services in her institution it was important for Davina on an operational level, to have a doctoral qualification because she was engaging with her stakeholders on a daily basis through various committees and groups and she wanted to be seen as active and engaged and visible. She believes that the currency of the doctorate was particularly important for her in terms of her own professional development and also because she wanted to talk to people outside the library world and she felt it was important that librarians talk outside the profession and for the library to be seem as relevant and part of the bigger educational picture.

She was in a position to help others with their research and wanted to experience their pain.

> I just felt, you know, that it would help in terms of professional development, in that regard. I suppose I made a real conscious decision then that if I was going to do this, you know, I wanted to do it for kind of professional development reasons.

4.6.5 Sub-theme E: personal ambition and interest in the research area

While I initially felt that these were two separate sub-themes, I decided that there was sufficient crossover that really they would fit better together. All of the participants expressed an intrinsic motivation for pursuing a doctoral qualification and sometimes that was linked to a thirst to pursue a particular research subject. Interestingly Leonard et al. (2005) found in their study which was largely based on self-completed open-ended questionnaires, that respondents felt that they hadn't chosen the right topic for their doctoral study and subsequently this had impacted their career negatively. Guerin et al. (2015) found that a genuine interest in the research area and a desire to contribute to knowledge in the field was a major motivating factor among the participants of their study.

We heard earlier that both Mary and Sonya dropped out of several college courses and both wanted to prove to themselves that they could do a doctorate. Sonya felt that she had always been on the back foot with her peers and was vocal throughout her interview about her failed opportunities and lack of progression so she embraced higher education later in life and proceeded straight from her Master's to do a doctorate. In her narrative Sonya tells us that after she had completed a multidisciplinary Master's qualification, she was not satisfied by what she had learned because she felt "it just skirted around the theory more than actually going down into

it". She was determined to explore the topic particularly the theory behind it to a greater intellectual depth. As she says "it didn't adequately challenge me, I just needed to see if I could do it and where it would take me but I really did need to explore that knowledge area to a greater extent where I could feel satisfied". When she got another position outside of higher education, she initially felt that she should no longer be doing an EdD, but was persuaded by the Head of School in the British university that it was still relevant and she should persevere. She changed the focus of her research when she moved into her new role and directly related it to a project she was implementing so she feels that one informed the other. Sonya's experiences reflect some of the tensions inherent in undertaking doctoral education and to an extent we can also see evidence here of "border crossing" (Burgess et al. 2011) where her study was initially immersed in a specific higher education context but when she moved outside academia to a professional workplace her study was changed to focus on a work-based issue. These changes not only impacted financially on her studies making her question why she was continuing with the doctorate, but also challenged her professional values and sense of identity.

Patrick too reveals his interest in a particular topic and its application to his role as a leader and manager but also as the topic he chose to explore further in his doctorate. He feels the research area is one which has already influenced his leadership style and so he felt it would be a good choice for him. As he says:

> So, there was an area I was very interested in studying some years back which was in the area of servant leadership which is the notion that the leader is one who serves. So you know, you set a good example and I suppose I did a lot of reading at the time around it and that has influenced I think part of my leadership and management style. So I felt that if I was really going to be an advocate of that I needed to put it into practice myself.

It is good to be back in and reading and engaging with reading at a different level. And I haven't formally done that for a number of years. And I think that helps in terms of confidence but also it broadens your knowledge. So you gain greater knowledge of different things, that helps, and it is amazing how, you know, in conversation with people, suddenly you have another link.

I was very practical. To me it didn't matter where I studied if at least I felt I could do it.

Mary too reveals that she was doing the doctorate primarily for herself "why am I doing it? I'm doing it for me". She is both unsatisfied and unhappy in her current role within the institution and wanted to challenge herself intellectually. She explains that she feels isolated in her current role at the institution and wanted to feel part of a group or team and therefore chose to do a class-based doctorate. She also had a particular interest in the changing nature of a university and really wanted to explore the idea of what it means to be a university in this day and age. Her particular role in her institution is linked to the idea of inclusive learning and for her there was a paradox for the university here, especially in terms of the challenge to implement a system for learners who are not in the mould of the traditional notion of the university student. Indeed she draws a parallel here to her idea of equality and how she sees everyone as her absolute equal including the child who struggles with learning and may never have been in a mainstream secondary school.

Davina too describes herself as ambitious and knew from an early age that she wanted to work in higher education and therefore says it is more by intention and design that she works in the world she is in. Pursuing the doctorate initially was about gaining confidence in a "variety of different forums outside of the library world". Achieving the doctorate very recently has levelled the playing field for her in terms of being able

to sit comfortably along with others at board and committee meetings and feel that she has a right to be there. Davina felt very strongly that she wanted to take particular aspects from the field of library and information studies and place them firmly in the wider educational context because the same issues were relevant across both spheres.

Siobhan reveals that she had initially considered doing a PhD some years before she started her EdD. She had been advised by someone when she was in the middle of doing her second Master's qualification that she should just go on and do a PhD and she was excited by the prospect "I hadn't thought about that and that kind of excited me kind of, ok, I can do something or maybe I could you know, maybe I could do that and it started tickling my fancy you know, imagine being Dr. Siobhan". She reveals that later when her colleague was enrolling for an EdD she got the notion that a PhD was better than an EdD and she initially thought "I want PhD after my name not EdD and decided right well she is doing the EdD I'll start considering the PhD route". She discussed a particular topic with her manager who was very supportive of her doing a PhD but he advised her against it, saying the topic was outside her knowledge area and wouldn't work. Eventually she decided to do the EdD because it was "a more achievable route for her".

4.7 Theme 3: Relationships

Relationships were a multidimensional and dominant theme within the narrative accounts and were also present across all of the main themes to a lesser degree. Relationships with friends, family, colleagues, peers, supervisors, teachers, other pupils, were intertwined in the lives of all the participants and for the most part the narratives drew attention to positive relationships. The sub-themes were (a)

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relationships with other professionals within the workplace (b) relationships with family and friends (c) collaboration and harmony (d) discord.

4.7.1 Sub-theme A: relationships with other professionals within the workplace

I was surprised that in the main, relationships with other professionals, including academic staff, were described as positive and good. As we have seen in the literature review, several studies have drawn attention to poor relationships and exclusionary issues within higher education workforces (Henkel, 2000; Whitchurch, 2010; Szekeres, 2011). Occasionally participants started to talk positively about these relationships with other staff groupings but then began to recount some experiences which had left them feeling upset or annoyed.

Patrick describes the relationships with other professionals in his institution as "very good" and he talks about the small campus environment which enables staff to walk to each other's office to make contact and "meet them face to face" and "build relationships" instead of relying on email. He liaises with professionals across the institution "I would be involved with all the support services from library to finance to academic administration, school administration and so on". He regards this engagement as "natural". He does say though that in terms of feeling valued in his role, it changes.

> Today is a good day, so I mean I am glad to say yes. And obviously there are some days when you go into "poor me" mode and I am working around the clock, you know the usual and nobody values me. But in the main, yes I think I would have to on balance say that yes, probably both students, staff and from the president I suppose, who is ultimately my boss, yes, in that sense I would have to say yes.

Sonya moved from one post to another within her previous higher education organisation and explains that in the latter position she had no choice but to reach out

to other people and engage with them and other aspects within her organisation because the role was very much a one person unit. She dealt mostly with decision makers and heads of departments and describes the relationships as mostly impersonal.

Siobhan has both positive and negative things to say about her relationships with other professionals in the institution. She talks firstly about those academics that she works with on a daily basis. While she admits some staff do see her team as "the help, the admin and we do stuff for them" she also points out that "relationships generally are very, very good" and she talks about a reciprocal arrangement where she will do something for academics and they will then reciprocate by helping her with a joint project further down the line. She believes that while the academics she works with appreciate her work and hold it in regard, it is the heads of departments, heads of schools and senior management personnel who "don't see what an important role we play really" and she puts this down to the seamless nature of the work her team do. Some of the discussions in the literature surrounding "third space identity" and "boundary stretch" are apparent in elements of Siobhan's narrative (Whitchurch, 2013, p. 137). Whitchurch (2010) for example has referred to the diversification of new professional roles within higher education and also the convergence between functions and different spheres of activity while McInnis (2010) has asserted his belief that joint endeavours between new professionals and academics have added to the already fragmented nature of academic work. Siobhan describes her experiences of working with "different types of professionals", other than academics, on large organisation wide funded joint projects, with staff from "up and down levels" from areas all around the institution and from other institutions. Many of those groups

include professionals from media design, development and structural designers and librarians. As she says it depends on the project and "there is never a 'don't work with that group' you know". She talks about the varying amounts of influence she may have on certain projects at certain times. Once again she talks about how some academics see her team as the hired help and they occasionally get calls demanding instant action or an email that would "almost make you cry". As she says:

> like the work I put into that and I get this snotty reply back so I think because we are seen very much as, like we are admin staff in (names institution) eyes even though we do academic work.

Siobhan also talks about the wider team that she is part of and it becomes apparent that after some institutional change affecting her work area, some relationships there have become strained in recent times. Her previous team was a smaller unit with very positive working relationships led by a very supportive manager. Some of the current issues surround pay, parity, contracts and roles and she explains that it is very political and complicated. She goes on to discuss a personnel issue which she revealed initially in her life grid and this is explored further under the sub-theme below '4.8.4 Sub-theme D - Being a female in HE' below.

Another relationship which Siobhan refers to at several points in her narrative is the one with her immediate line manager. Indeed it seems apparent that relationships prior to the shake-up in her team were more congenial. She explains that her immediate line manager was always encouraging in many ways and strongly encouraged her to undertake a doctorate telling her that she should be doing it and was more than capable of doing it. She says that she feels "very valued by certain people. I don't feel valued by other people".

Davina talks very strongly about feeling very valued in her role and in previous roles by colleagues and peers from within the institution and outside the library. She talks about her role in the institute and about working with a cross section of people from across the institute, and also nationally. She includes academics, staff from different disciplines and fields, staff working in learning and teaching, researchers, postgraduates and library staff. She talks about being proactive and innovative, and responding to people's needs and delivering things that "they don't even know they want but once they get them they want them, you know", and "about being part of a bigger team, you know, sitting at the table with your colleagues, being part of the bigger picture and influencing the shape of what we are and what we do and how we do it".

> I suppose my experience in the main has always been positive, you know, libraries, we are lucky in a way we have a very kind of niche role that we play that people don't know we are doing, but for the most part, I think we are favourably seen as people who deliver a really important role in our institutions. Wherever I have worked I have always felt that, in truth.

Throughout Mary's narrative she talks consistently about teamwork and how she loves being part of a team and believes strongly in teams working together. She refers to "we" when talking about significant achievements in her career and she praises many of her colleagues and former colleagues.

> I think we did change matters but the 'we' is very important. I am a team worker. I don't believe in the single inspirational leader.

From her early career where she established a team to implement new projects, to her current role where she works mostly in a small unit with one other staff member, it is clear she has experience of a variety of both good and poor relationships. She has worked and continues to work with professionals and academics from all around the

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institution and the nature of her work means that she also comes into contact with many people from outside her institution. She spends a lot of time working with various departments and academics.

> To me dialogue is hugely important and it is all about dialogue. It's about listening, it's about getting people over the humps which is often just restating in a different way. I quite enjoyed that. I like getting people to do things when they had already stated they weren't going to do it, and you know, it was quite enjoyable. I like doing that. I like talking to people.

4.7.2 Sub-theme B: family and friends

The theme of family and friends came across all the narratives, sometimes in terms of a supportive unit for participants while they were involved in their studies, other times as a feature of their childhood and early educational experiences, and sometimes related to illness or financial insecurity in the home. This theme has been found in other studies of doctoral motivation especially related to encouragement during the process of the doctorate (Wellington and Sikes, 2006; Guerin et al. 2015). There are obvious parallels with what Leonard et al. (2005, p. 146) identify in their study as "women's discontents with the doctorate" especially the assertion from some of their participants that HEIs are not concerned with students' outside commitments such as family, care arrangements, domestic work and relationships. These issues come to the fore in the narratives of Davina, Siobhan and Mary in particular.

Siobhan reveals that her parents "were very chuffed" that she was doing a Doctorate, "my daughter a doctoral candidate you know" and she was encouraged by them throughout.

> They would have listened to all the, I would have cried on their shoulders many a time throughout it but I would have been very much

encouraged and so on and by my sisters even though one of them
didn't understand, she thought I was absolutely nuts even to think
about it, but at the same time was very supportive like, and all the rest
of it, they would all be very much behind me.

I couldn't have done it without Paul's support because no matter how
much your parents or sisters support you if you have a partner it's not
going to happen at home, if there is support there, so yeah, that took a
lot of considering I suppose.

She refers to the support of her husband in the evenings when she got home from

work and sometimes he would take over at weekends. He also agreed that they could

use their finances to put the children into crèche a day a week when she was on her

job share week off so that she could get some work done on her studies.

Mary reveals the supportive environment she had at home as a child when she

discusses instances at school and in the playground where children who weren't as

fortunate as herself were bullied by the teachers and the school system and she makes

it clear that her parents would not have allowed such behaviour to be shown to her or

her brother. Mary also talks about the difficulties and responsibilities involved with

having elderly 'demented' parents who require care and being the breadwinner in her

household with an older child living at home who isn't earning or contributing to the

family income. This comes through at several points throughout her narrative: leaving

a job in Northern Ireland to go home to Ireland and look after her mother; not being

able to retire early because she is still financing her child's education and providing a

home for him "I have to throw him out and then he would be entitled to €100 and rent

allowance but anyway so I need to stay working"; and not having the support of her

retired husband at home, "he has enough on his plate" because he spends Monday to

Friday in Northern Ireland looking after his mother who has dementia. This particular

dimension to her narrative is potentially very interesting and reveals not only the

challenge to her doctoral identity as she struggles with all the different tensions within her professional and personal live, but also reveals that her life, like the lives of all of the participants, is not hermetically compartmentalised into the person she is at work (her professional life) and the person she is at home (parent/child/partner selves). Indeed as acknowledged by Goodson and Sikes (2001) "consequently anything which happens to us in one area of our lives potentially impacts upon and has implications for other areas too". As Mary elaborates:

> We get two nights of night sitters from the social services so I don't call them the SS anymore! That means he can come home for the weekend.

In Patrick's narrative we hear little about his own family background but he is happy to talk about his experiences of his students, telling us that he is happy to meet the parents and families of his "lifelong learners" at graduation day and regards it as one of the most important days in the college calendar primarily because of family. He talks about the conferring ceremonies, the number of students who are on credit courses, the stories of those who left education early and didn't succeed through formal education, and who then come back to a "second chance" at education.

Sonya explains how she would have liked her parents to be more disciplined with her when she was at school and university and feels that perhaps she would have stuck at her course and been more academically motivated if they had been firmer with her. As she says:

> I suppose my parents didn't really notice so the discipline at home wasn't, now I'm not a parent myself so I don't know how I would behave, but I've seen my husband who has a daughter and he is so disciplined with her and I probably needed that.

When she looks back at this aspect of her childhood she is critical of her parents and yet earlier in her narrative she tells us how her parents support her decision to leave primary school earlier than her peers and then also pay for her to go to another school when she is not permitted to take the choice of subject she wants.

Davina explains that it was very tough for her finishing the doctorate and she talks about her children and how the "thesis equalled absence" in their eyes. She explains that even though she was supported it was really hard to find the time to study. She also says that she is looking forward to having time in the evenings with her family, to enjoying things, accepting invitations, not feeling guilty over the children's homework and to spending the first summer in nine years where she can be present.

4.7.3 Sub-theme C: collaboration and harmony

Some of the participants describe harmonious collaborations and positive working relationships with other professionals within their higher education environment. As Siobhan says:

> In terms of stories, like, you get lovely emails from people just saying thank you so much for doing that. You get lovely voice mails I really appreciate the work you did on that for me yesterday and they keep you going you know and you forget about the ones that are negative you know.

Davina in particular refers constantly to feeling valued in her role and she regards most of the relationships and experiences she has had working with other professionals in both her previous and current role as being largely very positive.

> Definitely. On the whole I've had really positive encounters with all kinds of people from you know, across the sector in higher education. Absolutely, I would say, yeah, positive.

> Yeah, I do, I definitely feel valued in the role. In my previous role, I was at a senior level in an organisation and I felt very well-known, very well-valued. So many people you know wanted to have my input and I felt very, I did, in truth, I felt very valued and valued in the library, and outside of the library. I do feel very valued in my new role. In my new role I'm the Director. I do feel very valued. I suppose the difference between the two roles, in the other role I was very established, in this role I'm still very new but already I would feel very valued and to be truthful about it I felt very valued in my new role from the start, I really did. I felt like, from the very get go that I had been very welcome and people are delighted that I have chosen to come here and I have had great support within the institution since I came here. That's the truth.

Davina tells me that throughout her career as a librarian, she has for the most part felt valued. Her mantra is that librarians need to be engage and be proactive, to think creatively and to take chances and do things that people appreciate. Overall she thinks that the fact that people have had faith in her and have been prepared to take chances on her, has made her feel valued.

Sonya too talks about positive relationships within her previous workplace. She worked mainly with heads of department and decision makers within the institute and she mentions the head of library services in her institution with whom she worked very closely on a particular project.

> That was a really good engagement. I don't know maybe because it was of a particular interest to that person at the time and they also understood the need for it but he was so helpful and so supportive in terms of what I was trying to do. So I had no option but to work with and engage with others.

Sonya also talks about the support she received from those she reported to in her workplace, two managers in particular who encouraged and enabled her to gain her degree and then a Master's qualification before also supporting her quest to undertake a doctorate. Furthermore she mentions a "very decent boss" who facilitated her

working on a part-time basis to attend college on her days off. Quite importantly Sonya also refers to an incident at work where for the first time she felt that someone believed in her and wanted her opinion on something important. Someone in a senior management position gave her a voice and she felt that this was a defining moment for her and underlined the confidence that she believed she needed.

4.7.4 Sub-theme D: discord

While initially it appeared that relationships with academics and other professional staff groupings within higher education were positive, there were some instances where participants described experiences which were not so positive or harmonious. Mary for example, talks about a very disharmonious work environment where institutional change has impacted dramatically on her immediate role and responsibilities. As she says:

> As far as I'm concerned nobody gives a damn what I do.

> I feel valued with the (names project) initiative but that's all about outside the university, I don't feel wanted or valued in the university.

> My attitude is I'll try and do stuff that's actually good and that's changing the world, you know, they can like it or lump it.

> But were I to sit in my office and write my thesis twenty four hours a day would they notice, no, so there you go.

Siobhan too has recently not felt as valued in her role. Within her life grid she describes a particular situation where conflict arose over her decision to return to her permanent position after a period spent job sharing. This meant in effect that some of the people in positions of authority around her were not supportive and Human Resources in particular were lacking in their handling of the situation. This has led to

her feeling "more cynical about the place" and feeling that "it's a pay cheque". With regard to her immediate working environment she recognises that some of the lack of value is to do with possible personality clashes, some historical factors and also to the lack of parity in employment contracts within her own centre. Siobhan also elaborates on the recent merger which meant her small unit who had previously made great progress in their area of work and who had established a great reputation and a high profile within the organisation have been unable to move forward on projects, and while lots of projects and initiatives are discussed at meetings, you think "it would be absolutely brilliant, it will be fabulous and we can do this, that and the other and four years on absolutely nothing has happened".

> There is only so much of being kept down that you can put up with when you start to feel devalued or you start to feel your role just isn't as important when you can't see that you have achieved anything this year that's any different to two years ago whereas we were making great strides in the 10 years up to that you know. God I'm coming across fierce negative altogether.

> I suppose it depends who you are working with and when you are working with them yeah, and again from the three perspectives you feel valued by one and not by the other.

> We were moving things on and we were getting places and there was projects and e-learner days and summer schools and we felt we really had a purpose and we could really make a difference here. I think my opinion of the role or how I feel about the role has changed in the last couple of years because when you are subsumed into a larger group then there is an overall mission there is an overall roll there is an overall direction which isn't necessarily where we wanted to go

> Do you have two hours? Do I feel valued in my role? Recently, not as much as I would have. I feel valued by certain people. Maybe that comes down to personality clash possibly, maybe it comes down to the fact that the contracts aren't equal possibly and I think a lot of it has to do with, I suppose there are two ways of feeling value, valued within the centre as a whole, valued within the sub-team I work on or valued by the institute. Now I don't feel valued at all by the institute and I think a lot of staff are feeling the same, the results of the staff survey that came out a lot of staff are feeling that kind of way.

What becomes clear is Siobhan's frustration at the lack of movement on projects in her sub-team due to institutional change, mergers within the organisation and budget cuts. She says that institute wide not enough attention is being paid to centres such as hers and "a lot of departments are feeling very unloved at the minute". She acknowledges that there are tensions in the wider team she works with.

> I don't know but it might come down to personalities. Within my sub-team yeah I know very well that my contribution is valued and I feel valued in the role, in what I do within the four of five that I work closely with. Does it make me frustrated? Yes it does you know. Again I suppose it depends on what you are doing at a time on a particular project you feel very valued and something else, you don't because you feel you are bottom of the pile or you know what I mean?

Sonya explains that although she has not really had any personal disputes or discord within her previous roles within the higher education sector, she was working in a role when she started the doctorate where the particular nature of the job meant that occasionally there were disputes but she explains that they weren't personal, "so generally if I'm calling it is not good news so".

4.8 Theme 4: Identity

When we do narrative research we are asking our participants to consider their lives usually in relation to a particular experience or phenomenon, and by doing so we are also inviting them to share with us some of the influences on their lives and the influences and impact they have had on their own lives. We ask them to consider why they have chosen the particular path they have taken in life. I was interested to know if the participants were aware of their own agency or how much they had influenced their own lives or whether they regarded their decisions in life as being related to and influenced by the larger social world they inhabited and therefore inevitable (Goodson

and Sikes, 2001). A clear sense or impression of how particular lives are lived and expressed can be seen in the narratives. The four associated sub-themes were; (a) being a professional (b) labelling (c) identity within third level institutions and (d) being a female in higher education.

4.8.1 Sub-theme A: being a professional

Throughout the narratives there is an understanding that all of the participants consider themselves to be professional staff working in higher education. Several of the participants directly refer to themselves as professional in some sense and often describe other roles and staff groupings in the institution as professional. At times we see evidence of boundaries merging in their professional lives with academic duties increasingly expected of them as they undertake their doctoral studies.

Mary tells us about her role in the university where she works and discusses liaising with other staff groupings. She refers to both professional and non-professional roles in the university and describes her own role and the work she does as professional. She reveals potential tension in her workplace by telling me that academics don't mind using the terms academics and non-academics but baulk at their departments being described as professional or non-professional.

Throughout her narrative Davina talks about her professional position in the university, refers to librarianship as a profession and to her various roles throughout her career in higher education as professional roles. She also reveals that she decided to undertake the doctorate for professional development reasons and we see her

determination to develop her role within her institution. As she says of her professional career in higher education:

> I actively am involved in it and actively staying in it and developing in it as I go along.

In her life grid Siobhan refers both to working in a team with a range of professionals and having done a professional doctorate. When we talk about some of the issues which were raised through the grid, she begins to talk about the idea of being a professional.

> Actually, I'm delighted I did the EdD. Like I am professional I see myself as a professional, I did a professional doctorate and I think if anyone asked me would I recommend one yes I would.

Although she says that she is not a career woman she does reveal that she would like to achieve more than her role to date.

4.8.2 Sub-theme B: labelling

The issue of labelling within higher education was referred to specifically by all of the participants. This issue is prevalent in the literature surrounding the dislocation of identities in higher education and is specifically relevant for staff employed in professional roles other than academic. It is clear that relationships in higher education institutions are complex with some scholars arguing that while academics and professionals both play central and critical roles in their organisations and regularly interact and communicate they should be recognised as two distinct cultures (Clark, 1983; Allen-Collinson, 2007; Kuo, 2009).

Sonya for example, tells us that in her previous roles in higher education it was difficult to progress career wise and she explains that even after having done her doctorate she found a gulf between the grades.

> It was really hard because of the structures, the actual employment structures, there's grades and there is coloured grades and psychedelic grades and there is a very big gulf between them so that was really, really hard.

She goes on to tell me that after she achieved the doctorate and when she was no longer working in higher education, she spent a period of time reflecting on her previous position and felt that if possible, she would like to see if she could contribute something to her old organisation and if they would be interested in hearing from her. What's interesting here is that Sonya felt that because the institution had contributed to her education, had encouraged and financially supported her undergraduate degree, her Master's and then the initial stages of her EdD, there might therefore be an opening for her or a chance for her to contribute or to have a conversation about how she might be able to give something back to the organisation in terms of the knowledge, expertise and experiences she had acquired throughout her doctoral journey. Earlier in her narrative she had explained to me that while working at the higher education institution her immediate director and his manager were trying to recast a different role for her after she had completed both her bachelor and post graduate degrees. She tells me that they felt she could be providing more "not within my grad level but more within my competence level". They recognised that she could be contributing more to the organisation and it was in these circumstances that they supported her application to do the doctorate. As she says:

> A little story, I was here probably about four or five year you know, I wasn't sure where I was going. It was before the roles were split and before I was made head of the function, I was on a career break from the institution and I wrote an email to the President, "I've been here

five years, I've finished my doctorate, I've done all these wonderful things, I'd really like to come back and contribute to your organisation" so he did email me back and he said "I'll have to pass that on to….." he said to this particular person in HR and I was like "Ah forget it" and sure enough if I was to go back I'd be slotted in not at the grade I was on, I was grade 7, but at my substantive role, I was only acting up, I was grade 5. So I would be slotted back in at grade 5 executive assistant and I think, what is the point? I went through all of that effort to develop myself and you know there were a lot of initiatives that I was implementing but that still couldn't be recognised, so I'd be going straight back in where I left off.

She was very disappointed by the response and decided to stay where she was. Within a few months she was promoted to head of function.

We heard earlier in the literature review about some of the tensions involved in the assignment of labels in higher education (Allen-Collinson, 2007). Some of those labelling issues are apparent in Mary's narrative when she tells us that in her experience academics don't mind labelling administrative staff as non-academics but resent it when people then differentiate between professional and non-professional academic departments giving the French department as an example. She shows a certain amount of enjoyment when she goes on to say that it's about "chatting and negotiating and documenting and having little battles so that's what I do".

Siobhan too address the idea of titles and how different groups are regarded and labelled within her institution. She comes to the issue in several ways, firstly through the way her team are regarded by some lecturers. She talks about how they are seen by some as "the hired help" and "some academic staff see us very much as the help, the admin and we do stuff for them". She also explains that while her team do academic work they are regarded by the institute as administrative and their contracts are written with administrative terms and conditions. Also within her team there are

different contracts and varying levels of status and issues surrounding parity of esteem which she says is linked to historical factors and remains political, contributing to tensions and "bad feelings" in the workplace.

Siobhan returns again to this issue when she is talking about her specific role within her institute and also when she is discussing her life grid. While she acknowledges that there are many different titles associated with her actual role, she says that there are some which are demeaning and others which can cause a little bit of friction especially if you have "learning development officer and e-learning development officer within the one centre" because one may be valued differently than the other. Also:

> The word officer, ok, we never liked the word officer because you feel very much down the line there, a few pegs down, you feel you've been put a few pegs down, don't you? It is funny how words affect you.

> But that is silly, it is silly but it is how your mind plays isn't it? Whereas you've no problem with someone in a different institute being called instructional designer because you know damn well you do the same job and it doesn't matter that they are called something else.

> I don't think my title bothers me, I could be an instructional designer, I could be academic developer, I could be development officer or learning development officer, I do the same job and we all do the same jobs whereas it causes friction when you've got two different names going on in the one team which is silly.

> I think everyone kind of knows generally what you do because there is so many of these titles being used and it is really only important within your own institute, that's the people you are working with.

While Siobhan seems secure in her position she is aware of the literature surrounding the various issues in higher education around identity and labelling. As she says "there is a snobbishness around academic really isn't there too?"

4.8.3. Sub-theme C: identity

The literature review has revealed that activity in higher education tends to fall into the three broad categories of teaching, research and either service, administration or knowledge transfer (Whitchurch, 2012). Traditionally there have been exclusionary issues in higher education where both academic and professional groupings of staff see the other as more powerful and their own group as more marginalised but more recently the literature asserts that there has been a gradual blurring of the boundaries with increased opportunity for these staff groups to explore some of their overlapping interests through networks and partnerships (Henkel, 2000; Whitchurch, 2012). When I was analysing the narratives I was interested to see if any of the participants had thought about any of these issues when they were considering taking on a doctorate and if indeed any of these issues emerged naturally through the interview process. I was also interested to see if any of the participants had any thoughts about the doctoral process itself particularly their transition on the academic journey from professional HE worker to a Doctor of Education. Some have argued that for doctoral students to successfully adapt into the academic world they have to learn the cultural rules of the game even if it is a temporary adaptation (Scott and Morrison, 2010). Others have spoken about the challenges to a "doctoral identity" and how students have compartmentalised both their academic and professional identities during the doctoral journey (Burgess et al. 2011). Some of these issues have arisen for Patrick as

we see later and also Siobhan who is very aware of identity issues and also the notion of third space (Whitchurch, 2010).

Patrick is head of school in the area of Lifelong Learning and while explaining his journey into the field of higher education tells me that while his role is considered to be academic, he would describe it as more administrative. He explains that he tends to move across the areas "it is an all-encompassing sort of role here because it is very strongly admin at one level and it is very hands on, there is a lot of operation". He goes on to say that "there is a lot on the strategic side" because he and his team work closely with outside stakeholders, partners and collaborators running accredited courses specifically for industry and in many different fields and locations with students at all levels on the national qualification framework. Patrick tells me that he rarely teaches and hasn't done any recent research so he would regard his role as "heavily admin focussed, rather than more academic". While a lot of his activities focus around finding a rationale to run a course, or ascertaining demand to run a course, he says again "so there is a mixture, but it is not purely, it is far from academic but it is much, much stronger on the admin side" although he acknowledges that a lot of his meetings and conversations may be to do with academia in terms of policies and procedures, quality assurance issues, plagiarism and disciplinary cases.

> So there is a real mixture but as I said I would align it more closely to the non-academic. I don't think perhaps in those terms, yeah, I mean sometimes you hear discussions with people that say "well that is academic or that is the non-academic', I tend to move across both. So even in terms of committees and meetings I am on kind of a mixture of all. So it involves both, but to me it is more strongly non-academic.

Patrick also talks about some of his previous roles in his current institution and describes them as being much more conventionally academic. What is interesting here

is that although Patrick says he doesn't think in terms of academic and non-academic, he uses the terms throughout his narrative. He says that he doesn't really have a problem with people using the term non-academic and says for him, the fundamental question is what is academic and what is non-academic? He goes on to try and answer his own question and concludes that "it really comes down to the institution". Additionally he says that "the role of the academic is more than just lecturing and research, so it does span across all of other services" but reiterates that for him he is a manager of an academic unit and maybe more of an administration unit because "we oversee our own finance" and also "we oversee our own admissions and examinations". Patrick also reveals some of the tensions between what he considers as his daily administrative role and the role or identity required of him as a doctoral student when he talks about getting back into reading, writing academically, engaging with the literature and engaging with reading at a different level. He talks about building up his confidence around these areas because he hasn't done it formally for a few years.

Siobhan loves her work and says that she is very happy in what she does and knows that she is good at her job "I don't have an ego about it but I know I'm good at what I do". She brings up the issue of identity and also introduces the term "third space" into her narrative. Siobhan seems clear that she knows her role and believes that what others think of her contributes to how she views herself and how her identity develops. While she says she is unconcerned about what title she is given, she then goes on to say that words do affect her and while she knows they shouldn't, she feels that sometimes one job title may be perceived and or valued differently from another

especially if they are both used within the same institution. At several points she muses over what her identity is and how her job title influences that identity.

> I suppose for me I form my identity in my role from what others think of me I suppose. Like I know what job I do but how do I? It is very hard to articulate this isn't it?

> I think how you are viewed by others or how you are viewed by the lecturer, it develops your identity as in like I know I play an important role in a lot of people's jobs okay, because you know by the calls you get, the emails you get they can't do some of the stuff they want to do without your input, without your support, your help, your leadership or whatever so I know, I suppose, how do you put it, I don't think my title bothers me, I could be an instructional designer, I could be an academic developer, I could be development officer or learning development officer. I do the same job, and we all do the same jobs.

She goes on to talk about the term 'academic' and also how a job title can place value on your role, or not. She also discusses the friction in her institution caused by the use of different words such as "non-academic" and also the varying titles used within one centre to differentiate between people who are effectively doing the same job but who are possibly perceived and therefore valued differently. Siobhan also brings up the dichotomy between her job title with the classification of non-academic, and the expectation from her institution and also her management to perform academic work. This complexity around the actual role she performs and what the institution requires shows a definite overlap between administrative and academic duties within her role. The institution labels her role as administrative and her working conditions and terms are definitely administrative and yet while the institution would prefer that her team become involved in academic work and the "research side of things" including supervising students and lecturing, there is a refusal to reclassify their contracts. She also says that she doesn't think her institution is unique in this. Siobhan goes on to say that while she was completing her doctorate there was an expectation that she would supervise other postgraduate students "I wasn't taking anybody's problems I had

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enough of my own but then again after completion she was asked would she like to do it and she agreed that she would. While she hasn't supervised anyone to PhD level before she has taken the license to supervise course and is ready to take on her first PhD student next year. As she says "we are being encouraged to supervise at doctorate level and there is a lot of stuff going on at the minute actually, there is talk of trying to get an EdD up and running but that is a good few years down the line".

Siobhan then introduces the term "third space" in her narrative and it is clear that she has thought about this before. She identifies herself as clearly in this "third space" before saying that she doesn't believe the institution really know what to do with her team or where to place them. As she says:

> Now I think that we are very much like this, have you come across the expression in the third space? I think since I've come across that, the more I see they are dead right, we're very much. I don't think institutes know what to do with us really and a lot of that is kind of historical as well. The centres were set up kind of on an ad hoc basis and I don't know they don't really know what to do with us I think.

Siobhan tells me that her team initially started off as a project then their contracts were extended and then extended again. She says that perhaps the history of their team has contributed to how they are regarded within their own institution "maybe it's because of this that we were never really maybe a definite part and whether there were a lot of bad feelings or not I don't know". She also says that the recent merger has left them in a position where they aren't supposed to be dealing with anything to do with technology and yet "someone rings you up and they want to know how to do e-assessments how can you tell them I can't tell you where to click now because you'll have to ring IT services for that". Siobhan feels that there is definitely a blurring of

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the roles in her own position and goes on to tell me some of her duties within the team.

> So I suppose providing leadership support to staff as they transition from face to face to embedding technology and embedding mobile learning, enhancing and further transforming their activities, we're involved in programme redesign, new programmes will come to us as well, getting programme documentation together, it is really, really varied. It is everything to do with everything that's learning and teaching with an emphasis on the technology side of it I suppose. And we're supposed to be involved in research as well.

Earlier in her narrative Siobhan also refers to her identity as a young girl. She describes how her identity was caught up with that of her older sister and how she idolised her and "wanted to do what she did". As a result of that idolatry she followed her sister into primary school teaching and although in hindsight she doesn't think it was a great idea or a natural route for her "I think it was a bit of a forced journey", at the time she didn't really put any thought into it or her options. Siobhan explains that because she kept saying she wanted to be a teacher like her sister it then became the accepted narrative, leading her to do exactly that.

Davina clearly identifies herself as a professional librarian but she also regards herself as very much part of the wider higher educational context. She feels strongly that librarians historically were never very pushy or confident about their role in higher education and their identity was always associated with the stereotypical image of the academic library. Davina feels that this is changing and she is in favour of this change especially because, as she sees it, everyone in higher education is working within a digital landscape. Therefore to make libraries part of the narrative around learning and teaching in higher education in Ireland and beyond she thinks it is essential that librarians start talking outside the profession. She also tells me that librarians need to

be engaged in actively pursuing doctoral qualifications so that they are familiar with the emerging theory as well as the practice.

> I do think for the profession it's better that we are part of the whole picture, sort of the theory of it as well as the practice of it. If we don't do doctoral work and if we are not involved at that level we will always be tangential at the practice level as opposed to conceptually involved and involved in the design of the theory and influencing how that might look and feel in the wider sphere of education.

> I suppose that people want to hear what we have to say and that increasingly library people, I think for a long time people weren't great at speaking up and saying, you know, sort of singing our praises or establishing ourselves but I think as time goes by we are getting better at being confident and being, you know confident in a variety of different forums outside the library world.

In her narrative Sonya reveals that at primary school her identity was caught up with her academic prowess and thus she identified as always coming first in the class. Challenges to her identity occurred when she left primary school a year earlier than her peers and had to compete academically to retain her first in the class position from before. Furthermore, she was now the youngest child in the year and this meant she left school at seventeen, a year earlier than her peers. Although initially she worked hard for her intermediate certificate, she became disillusioned with the school when she was required to take home economics for her leaving certificate in contrast to the boys in her year who were allowed to take science subjects. This set her on a course then which would continue for many years, changing schools, slacking off academically before dropping out of one, then two undergraduate degrees, and then continuing to drop out of a succession of educational and other qualifications before finally finishing an undergraduate degree in her late thirties to early forties. Sonya is very clear throughout her narrative that she was disappointed in her own ability to finish a course and this contributed to her feeling that she was on the back foot with

her peers but also gave her a "quest and thirst for learning" which ultimately challenged her to pursue a doctoral qualification. She cites dropping out of college as having had a major effect on her life, experiences and identity. Sonya also refers to a particular experience which seems to have made a lasting impression on her and that was when someone within the higher education institution where she worked actively sought her opinion thereby giving her a voice and attaching value to her contribution as she sees it, at a time when she needed to have that understanding and her confidence underlined. As she says:

> Now I'm very comfortable with the experiences that I had, oh my goodness that took me so long to actually own it and be proud of it, I mean, I was so regretful or maybe even ashamed to a certain extent of having not pursued a particular path and feeling that I was not quite at the level of others. I'm getting over that now. It's about time isn't it?

Importantly we also see challenges to Sonya's doctoral identity several times throughout her narrative, firstly when she talks about not using her title as Doctor of Education and secondly when she is challenged at her Viva and asked why she didn't do a PhD. Although she cites several reasons for not using her doctoral title including working with medical doctors who don't really understand her title, perhaps most revealingly, she tells us that her husband is "a bit funny" about her using her title. Although she tells us that she has finally owned her experiences and accepted her alternative route to higher education, her reluctance to "own" her title in her workplace hints at tensions surrounding her doctoral identity and to what Burgess et al. (2011) refer to as "border crossing".

For Mary, the institutional changes which have taken place have changed her area of responsibility and have as she sees it eroded her identity. Mary now feels that "the process of disengagement" before she retires has already begun and she feels that

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"they leave me alone and I leave them alone". During the interview Mary revealed some additional information about her status and her work environment but asked specifically that it remain confidential. It was clear that she felt her job was no longer what it once was and she felt isolated, insecure and deeply offended. In addition she remains afraid that her role could be taken away from her entirely and she worries so much about this that it has had a negative impact on her health. Throughout her narrative Mary refers to "being a woman in higher education" and it is clear from what she says that she believes that women are not valued within higher education. It is clear she identifies with this phenomenon herself and outlines several instances where she was treated differently or not valued within her institution because she was a woman.

4.8.4 Sub-theme D: being a female in HE

The issue of gender in higher education is currently very topical both within the literature and also the media. Four of my research participants were female and the thread of being a female in higher education ran across all of their narratives. Within that thread issues such as career choices, childcare and motherhood all rose to the fore. Three of the participants were mothers who worked full-time in higher education and had just completed or were about to complete their doctorate. All of them talked about how difficult they found it to study while also trying to balance family life and their work commitments. Several studies have referred to the impact of doctorates on students' personal lives, the demands made by educational institutions on their students and also lack of support generally for those students with family and care commitments (Denicolo and Pope, 1994; Leonard et al., 2005; Wellington and Sikes, 2006). Although Wellington and Sikes (2006) were reluctant to debate the influences

of gender, social class, etc. on students' experiences of being involved with professional doctorates, they do state that they are confident that they do have an impact. They also suggest that their study shows that women have greater experience than men at "plate spinning" and examples of this can be evidenced in both Davina's and Siobhan's narratives (ibid, 2006).

Davina makes it clear that she is a full-time working mother and she refers to the difficulty she found trying to balance the demands of her full-time work and also her family life with the demands of completing a doctoral qualification. She describes bluntly how she has made a lot of sacrifices in terms of time not spent with her children "when you are working full-time and you have young children you are literally stealing time wherever you go, early mornings, late nights, giving up things, not going on holidays or turning down invitations". She gives examples of where family outings and events have been postponed, shortened or cancelled in order to complete her doctoral thesis. As she explains, her children came to associate the word thesis with her absence and when she went to the library to study in the evenings her children would say "oh mum, not your thesis!" While she does express feeling some guilt over this she also tells me that she was dogged about finishing and thinks it is a good thing that her children witnessed her hard work and commitment to achieving her doctorate. She hopes that in time her children will say "wow mum is a doctor" and she hopes this will outweigh "the thesis equals absence bit".

> When they are this young because it is hard and as a woman you do feel it like. You do feel, you just feel well, the principle of why we are doing it is really good and all of that, the practice of it because it is difficult, it is very difficult, you know, it really is all, there isn't even anything I could think about in terms of time management. It's just there isn't enough hours in the day. You are just doing the very best you can with the little bit of time you have and you have to spread yourself as widely and as thinly as you can just in terms of keeping

the whole show gig, like, it is difficult, you know. Yeah, even when you are supported it is difficult like, you know.

It is clear that Davina found the process of working on her thesis hard going especially in terms of her commitment to so many different areas of her life and although she talks about support she doesn't refer directly to a partner. As she thinks about the unintended consequences of doing a doctorate she says that perhaps "your children will want to be doctors just because you are a doctor and it's no big deal to be a doctor – well it is a big deal – but, you know for them it's like why couldn't I or why wouldn't I?" She tells me that on a personal level doing the doctorate and as a woman you need to have that dogged determination "resilience, hard work, commitment" to get the thing over the line, and she refers to herself as a mountain goat where she found she had the capacity "to do this kind of work, to dig deep, like running a marathon".

Mary believes that many of the issues she has confronted in her institution have arisen because she is a woman. Major restructuring in her institution has led to significant change and upheaval in her role and to a feeling of isolation and insecurity about her job. As she says, "I don't feel either wanted or valued". She also believes that the institution is "getting more and more sexist as the years go by".

> There are lots of things I think that contribute to not being valued in a place and I think being female is one of them, you know, you often sort of say to yourself, God, if you are female they think secretary and they don't value secretaries.

This theme of sexism and discrimination continues throughout her narrative. She explains that after being side lined in her role and despite earning a very substantial salary the institution has not asked what she is actually doing. If they were to sit down and work out the sums they would realise that they don't get value out of her because

"if you are female they think secretaries and sure secretaries don't cost very much. I'm sure they don't think that explicitly but in their hearts they do". Mary also reveals that despite all of the stress in her workplace, she is still working because "I am the breadwinner". She won't be retiring early because of these financial commitments to her family including her son who is still living at home and her retired husband who is absent from the family home a lot in order to mind his "demented mother".

Earlier in her narrative Mary talks about "all the sorts of experiences where equality was much offended against" including acts of inequality, especially against woman, she witnessed in the primary school yard and incidents where Ireland is revealed to have been a "sexist society".

> Anyway as I said it wasn't a terribly equal space. I'm not saying that you know the people who were teaching weren't doing their best within the society that it was but it wasn't an equal society and it was also a very sexist society. I mean when my mother told the rate collector, you have probably never experienced a rate collector, but the rate collector used to come round once a year, my mother told him that I was going to university, the same as my brother and he said 'what would you want sending a girl to university, sure what's she going to do only get married and have babies', so that's the world I'm coming from.

And again at secondary school:

> It was terribly sexist by then of course as well you know, lots of men, lots of trainee priests and post trainee priests and whatever else. I can't say I enjoyed it.

Within Siobhan's narrative we hear echoes from Davina's struggles to manage work and family commitments in order to complete her doctorate, and we also hear about the strong influence of a female family member in Siobhan's life resulting in her decision to go into the field of primary school teaching. She also talks about being a female in higher education and we hear about the choices she makes in her career path

both to facilitate her doctoral study and also to support her husband when he loses his job. At the beginning of Siobhan's narrative she tells us how she followed her sister into primary school teaching but once there she realised that she was stuck or "out to grass" at the tender age of twenty and very unhappy. We hear how she assesses the reality of her situation and recognises that there is no progression for her within teaching because no one is going to take her seriously as a contender for either a vice principal or principal role.

Evidence of Siobhan compartmentalising her identities (Scott and Morrison, 2010) while trying to complete her doctorate unfold as she tells us about her experiences nearing completion. We hear of long days at work resulting in long periods of time at crèche for her children. She and her husband agree that Siobhan will work a job share arrangement allowing her more time with her children and enabling her to spend more time on her doctoral study. Although she says that at the end of the day she was "knackered", she also acknowledges that "at least" she was at home with her children and her husband would take over in the evenings and weekends to allow her some time to study. Information in the life grid reveals that the job share arrangement was curtailed abruptly after four years when Siobhan's husband was made unexpectedly redundant. We see evidence here of Siobhan's struggle to retain ownership and regain her full-time position (even though her contract specifically stated that she was the main post holder) while trying to complete her doctorate. A very stressful time followed with Siobhan's husband out of work while she experienced huge difficulties in getting her job back and was faced with the threat of the Labour Court.

While Siobhan states in her narrative that she is not a career woman, "I don't want the big job, and the big role, but I would like a little bit more than what I am at", it is clear that, while she is happy with her current role, she is struggling with where she can go next in terms of career progression. She admits that it is the longest she has stayed in a job and would prefer not to retire out of the same job that she went into. What is interesting here is that while she has just completed a doctorate she expresses concern about leaving the higher education field and going into the private sector because "it's scary" and while there might be some job opportunities "out there" her husband is concerned that it might not work out and they would be thrust into "deep trouble" financially again. She talks about being so young at twenty eight and thinking how you "were the big woman" and yet only now at forty one does she realise that now she is the adult and after having "done all this big woman stuff you know, and being in exactly the same role it's kind of demoralising a little bit, you kind of God maybe I don't want to retire from this role, I don't want to be doing the same job". What comes across in Siobhan's narrative is a somewhat surprising lack of confidence sometimes surrounding her educational qualifications and achievements although it isn't clear if this is because she thinks that as a woman she's less likely to have the opportunity or whether it is because she has little faith in her own competencies.

> I suppose I was amazed I got it actually because I was coming from a primary school and it is just a big jump when you think about it, primary school into higher education.

> I'm still amazed I actually got into it.

> And I said they'll never take me seriously when I go for the interview you know.

4.9 Theme 5: Support Network

Support for participants to do the doctorate, and sometimes the lack of support, came across very powerfully in all of the narratives. It ranged from family support, spousal support, institutional support, support from friends, colleagues, peers, and also from organisations. Some of these findings were echoed in the literature with several studies reporting that the encouragement, advice and support from family, friends and peers was very important to many doctoral students and furthermore with the lengthy undertaking required some of that support veered into a social context particularly where the support was emotional, practical or financial (Brailsford, 2010; Guerin et al. 2015). The four main sub-themes were (a) familial support (b) peer support (c) institutional support and (d) financial support.

4.9.1 Sub-theme A: familial support

Familial support includes support from family members and also spouses. Two of the participants referred to the support of their partners as being fundamental to the successful completion of their doctorate. All of the participants referred to support or a lack of it from their families in some form or another.

Siobhan was pregnant and working on a full-time basis when she decided to undertake the EdD and because her children were in crèche for long hours she made the decision to change to a job-share position which would allow her to spend more time with her children at home while also allowing her some time at home to work on her thesis. Additionally towards the end of her studies, she had to put her children into the crèche on some of her days off to allow her the time to complete the writing of her thesis and she says her husband was not only complicit in this arrangement but actively

encouraged it. Her husband also took over in the evenings for a few hours and occasionally at weekends to allow her time to study.

> I couldn't have done it without Paul's support I think because no matter how much your parents or sisters support you if you have a partner, it's not going to happen at home if there is no support there, so yeah, that took a lot considering I suppose we were just married, and we had, like we had Ronan fairly quickly within a year and a half afterwards.

> The EdD really spanned our whole starting the family phase, do you know what I mean, it only ended when they were all there, so yeah, even down to little things with you know putting them into crèche for an extra day a week because I was job sharing then at that stage so week on week off and the week I was in I was too knackered to go home in the evening to get any work done, the week I was off I had the kids at home so you couldn't get any work done, so for your partner to agree that a certain amount of money can be thrown at a crèche so that you can take an extra day to get this stuff done that he is seeing no results from whatsoever for five years.

> I think yeah, you couldn't do it without support you really couldn't.

Davina too mentions several times how difficult it was to do the doctorate even with the support that she had. She talks about stealing time everywhere to complete her thesis and how her children equated the word thesis "with mum being gone, you know, thesis equals absence". While she knew the principal of why she was doing a doctorate was good, the time management was very hard and 'there isn't enough hours in the day. You are just doing the best you can with the little bit of time that you have'.

> And if I was going back to the library in the evenings or whatever they would say 'oh mum not your thesis' and you know, they would know what you were doing and where you were going and it just became this awful bad word really.

While she says that she thinks people understand in general how tough it is to do a doctorate, it is hard for them to understand "what it's actually like, the pain of it". While she always felt supported it is clear that she also felt that people were losing

patience with it and wondering if it would ever end. Davina talks also about making huge sacrifices in her personal and family life, cancelling events, missing holidays and turning down invitations and she acknowledges that even with support it is still very difficult. Leonard et al. (2005) draw attention to the fact that for many children and families the lengthy presence of the thesis is a factor and they discuss situations where participants refer to some uneasy relationships and negative impacts and situations where participants claim little impact or none.

It is clear from Mary's story that there is a lack of support from her family and friends but she justifies this by explaining that her husband is busy as a carer preoccupied with his mother who has dementia and so takes little interest in her studies "he has enough on his plate". Mary tells me that her closest friend probably thinks "why would you bother?" while other friends tell her to "oh for God's sake, get it done, just do it" and as she says wryly "so they are very supportive!" What strikes me here is Mary's decision to be connected to a group based professional doctorate where she won't be the lonely scholar and perhaps receiving support from her fellow students. Some studies have talked about the support, collegiality and social interaction the professional doctorate facilitates and the friendships and professional networks created after completion of the doctorate (Leonard et al., 2005; Wellington and Sikes, 2006).

Patrick tells me that he is supported by family and friends but doesn't elaborate any further. He does say that sometimes he has put himself under pressure and has blamed everyone else around him but after a more reasoned reflection he would say, that yes, he has been supported in his decision to do the doctorate.

4.9.2 Sub-theme B: peer support

Several of the narratives reveal support from among peers for their studies. In particular, Davina and Siobhan mention instances where they have been shown support from others working with them.

Davina explains that while she took longer than most people to complete her studies, she felt that her peers were always very encouraging and supportive, and people from across the institution would have offered their help as critical friends. Her words reveal a very supportive and collaborative environment.

> They would have read bits and helped me and would have, equally they were working more in an academic sphere, but they would have absolutely helped and they were critical. I don't know that I would have got it over the line unless I had a few critical friends like that. People were, yeah, so absolutely I would have got that help from people who acknowledged that I was doing it. And I suppose the other side of it is they probably, you know, appreciate that I was doing it, you know, they acknowledged that I was doing it, they supported me but they, you know, could see why I was doing it. They were interested in the work.

> People who knew me were interested in me and helping me get the thing over the line.

Siobhan too talks about support within her particular peer group. She was surrounded by a team of people who mostly already had their PhD and those who hadn't had recently enrolled on an EdD. She was encouraged to do it by her team leader who told her that she "was capable, quite capable" of taking on a doctorate.

4.9.3 Sub-theme C: institutional support

Throughout the narratives there were two sides to the theme of institutional support. On one side there were those participants who felt let down by their institutions for

various reasons and then there were others who felt that they got everything they could have got from their institutions. There is also another underlying theme here about how the institutions have made use of their investment in terms of financial support for those undertaking doctoral study. Siobhan for example has been asked to supervise doctoral students even though her contract is administrative. Sonya on the other hand felt that she had made an effort to improve and develop herself through doctoral study and yet the institution was not prepared to offer her anything in return.

Siobhan tells a story of mostly positive institutional support where she receives financial support to pay for the fees, support from her line manager and support in terms of paid study leave.

> You know you got the study leave you got five days study leave which wasn't huge but it was enough so yeah I always felt supported doing it. I did get a letter from xxx when I went over the four years so it was into the fifth year and I did get a letter saying I trust you will be submitting because you are costing an extra year's fees and on paper it says you should be able to do it inside the four.

However, through her completion of the life grid, another story surfaces, and that is one where the institution doesn't acquit itself so well in terms of employee relations. While the story is not completely relevant to her EdD experience, it does show a lack of regard for someone undertaking one of the highest pinnacles of educational achievement. We heard previously about Siobhan's fight to get her full-time position back after her husband loses his job and she tells us that this experience has probably made her a lot more cynical about the place, damaging her relationship with HR, and encouraging an attitude of "it's a paycheque you know, I'll do my hours and it's a paycheque". She says that she put so much energy, so many hours and so much time into her work and then to be treated in that way made her feel that "you're paper, you

are a number, you have a contract, they are not looking at your role, they have no connection with you, there is no rapport there, there is no nothing you know". This was happening as she was preparing for her Viva and because of the financial strain, it became a very stressful time in her life, "it was a life experience, a life issue and a work related one".

Davina explains that as a librarian there are no entitlements to prolonged sabbatical leave periods or even summers off, and so she was doing a lot of it on her own time. She says that she believes that if you really want something you will find a way. Davina too tells a story of where she felt very supported by the library where she worked, and her institution.

> I would say I absolutely got everything I could have got and was as supported as I could have been and I felt really lucky about that and really fortunate and really grateful for that in the institution and I really did, like. So yes, I felt very supported and yes, I felt I got everything I could have got within the system if you like.

In addition Davina was working in an area when she was doing her doctorate that was very focussed on staff training and development and even during the recession when it was more difficult to reward people there were always opportunities for courses to keep people motivated.

Patrick reveals that long working hours have meant that he started the doctorate under no illusions about how he was going to have to make the space and time for himself. He had no expectations that the institute would release him from work and this has turned out to be correct. This has meant that he has had to be more disciplined about his time including withdrawing from the later evenings.

Mary reveals in her narrative that while she has been supported in a financial sense by her and has also been given time off to attend her classes, she has not been given study leave nor has she felt supported in the sense that anyone has asked about her studies or shown an interest in what she is doing or how she is progressing. It is clear from her narrative that she is underutilised by the institute and feels that this is a waste of resources.

> Now there is no such thing as study leave but were I to sit in my office and write my thesis twenty four hours a day would they notice, no, so there you go. That's enough of an answer to that one.

Sonya refers to several instances of institutional support from her managers within the higher education institution where she worked when she started her doctorate. Some of the support issues were concerned more with the area of computers and software, time off from work to attend class and also financial and study support. However, Sonya insists that an employer can only do so much and that it was up to her to ensure that she put in place the supports and systems that would enable her to achieve her doctorate while still delivering what she was expected to deliver within her role.

Sonya's experiences of trying to give something back or contribute to the HEI where she previously worked and which funded all her third level qualifications up to her doctorate before she left for other employment raises an interesting question about why HEIs fund professional staff through doctoral education, what is in it for them? This question will be revisited in the conclusions for this study.

4.9.4 Sub-theme D: financial support

All of the participants revealed within their narratives that they had been funded by their institutions to do a doctorate and they all verbalised their appreciation. While

Patrick's initial quest for funding to undertake an education doctorate was turned down, his reapplication to do a taught PhD in higher education was approved by his institute. Mary received funding for her studies and her fees were waived during a period of illness when she was unable to attend college. Sonya initially received approval for funding from her HEI then when she left just under a year into the course she received funding from her new employer. She had previously received funding from the same HEI to do an undergraduate and a postgraduate qualification while employed there. Both Siobhan and Davina received full funding for their courses. When she went over the initial agreed four year funding period Siobhan received a letter requesting that she submit and reminding her that on paper the course should take four years so an additional year would mean extra cost for the institution. Davina took nine years to complete and received full funding throughout.

4.10 Theme 6: The doctoral journey

Earlier in the literature review scholars argued that professional identities in higher education have been widening out and for many of these professionals, pursuing a doctorate in higher education could be seen as an opportunity to enhance career mobility especially in a more fluid higher education environment (Whitchurch, 2006). Therefore I was interested to see if any of the participants identified any impact or change, as a result of pursuing a doctorate, to either their professional working lives or to their personal lives. Out of the five research participants, three had completed their doctorate, one was nearing completion and the fifth participant was in the first year of their programme. In the interview, all participants were invited to share their thoughts on their doctoral experiences including the impact, if any, the doctorate had made to their lives. In their narratives all of the participants referred to their doctoral

experience and some talked specifically about 'being a doctor' and reflected also on the notion of having a doctoral identity. While the idea of "doctorateness" has been described by some as an elusive concept where an "identifiable, common-to-all quality will never be found or accepted" other scholars have described it as a "precondition scholarly attribute of theses that examiners look for when judging their academic worth" or more simply, where students are invited to consider where explicitly in their thesis they have engaged with the criteria associated with doing doctoral research (Wellington, 2013, p. 1501; Trafford and Leshem, 2009, p. 315). Whatever the definition of 'doctorateness', there is agreement in the literature that the doctoral journey including the viva voce can be "emotional and lifechanging" and the impact on peoples' lives is often "a web of complex tensions" (Wellington, 2013, p. 1491; Burgess et al., 2011). While two main sub-themes were identified here (a) being a doctor: doctoral identity and (b) the Doctorate versus the PhD, it should also be noted that some of the other main themes identified above, in particular support, identity and relationships are also closely connected.

4.10.1 Sub-theme A: being a doctor: doctoral identity

While all of the research participants were able to reflect on the experience of doing a doctorate, three of the participants had completed the doctorate and were able to talk at considerable length about the impact it had made to their lives, both professionally and personally.

Siobhan reveals that she is delighted she did the doctorate and would have no hesitation recommending it to others. As she talks about her motivation for enrolling on a doctoral programme she reflects on how she had imagined herself as a doctor

well before she embarked on the EdD and was "tickled" and "excited" by the idea of it, "imagine being Dr. Siobhan". It is clear from what she says throughout her narrative that both the doctoral journey and attaining the award have affected her considerably on a personal level. She tells me that she is proud of her achievement and even signing her name as Dr Siobhan gives her the occasional "oh" moment because it is still new enough that she can do that. She tells me that her parents were 'chuffed' that their daughter was a doctoral candidate and she shares several amusing anecdotes about her family and their teasing of her doctoral status. She is the only one in her family to have earned a doctorate so she is often told to "get off her high horse". Towards the end of her narrative she becomes emotional and takes out a tissue when she reflects on her award ceremony and how she felt walking across the floor to collect her doctorate. She tells me she still gets emotional thinking about it "Oh Lord. I even got the tissue out, look, I knew this would happen".

> I remember just even graduating walking across and I was grand sitting in the hall, I was grand lining up and I was next and just as they started calling my name my eyes completely filled up, couldn't see a thing, even when I think of it, it happens again, couldn't see a thing and I was wearing slightly higher heels than you might normally wear on a daily basis and I was thinking am I going to make it across to the other side of the stage without falling because I couldn't actually see where I was going and you're trying to hold it in because you think oh my God, this is like five and a half years of work that has gone into this and oh, you know, look at me, and I'm graduated three years, but just I think it has a huge influence, I think it is the biggest thing you'll ever do, you know.

> Masters you know I took it in my stride and I went up and graduated and came up, yeah, I got my Masters, great, but the doctorate was completely different, it has a huge effect on you I think you are just so drained doing it as well and I think that takes years to leave you and you know only in the last maybe year and a half I've gotten over the guilt factor of watching telly you know, or picking up a book and reading it you know. I think it has a massive impact on you, more than anything else ever does you know and you can't go through the whole five and lordy be, do not know if you are not, if your mental health is in any way fragile you're finished, tip you over the edge.

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Siobhan also tells me that she doesn't think the doctorate has impacted her professional working life because she still does "basically what I always did". She supervises several postgraduate students and has been asked to supervise students at PhD level despite being on an administrative contract. While she is always being asked to publish, "there is certainly a pressure on us to get more involved in the research side of things" but budgetary concerns prevent her visiting and speaking at more conferences so she chooses where she speaks with care. She believes that not having done the doctorate would have had more effect on her role. As she explains she now feels that academically she is equal to everyone else that she works with which has given her confidence in what she is doing. She also expresses concern that she has never framed her cert, or printed out the thesis as evidence and should before her laptop crashes.

> I was just so worn out I just didn't care anymore I just wanted, I'm done, I'm just done and that's it.

Davina too talks about the impact she imagines the doctorate will have on her life. Having only recently just obtained it, she says "you probably end up being perceived differently". Interestingly her initial reflections are to do with her professional role. She tells me that she hopes she was right in her initial reasons for wanting to do the doctorate, that no one can take it from her and that it will continue to be of currency. Then she goes on to say that she doesn't feel hugely different on a personal level and she doesn't know how much impact it will have on her life. She reflects on changing her name and address cards, and having the title of Doctor added to her name. She also thinks about the unintended consequences.

> maybe, you know, your children will want to be doctors just because you are a doctor and it's no big deal to be a doctor, well it is a big deal, but you know, for them it's like why couldn't I or why wouldn't I? That thing maybe could come about but other than that I don't

know personally, really. You are still you, you know, you are still the person that people liked you for before you did it. Maybe they, you know, they will still like you after you did it. On a personal level, I suppose what it does is, it shows you, it allows you the opportunity to demonstrate things like resilience, hard work, commitment.

Davina talks further about being like a mountain goat and having the dogged determination to get "the thing over the line". She likens the experience to running a marathon and thinks it shows your capacity to do this kind of work and to take on a big commitment.

I feel, you know, this is great now and, you know, it's done, I just have to, I have to finish my corrections, so I'm just at the very tail end of it but you nearly can't believe it's over at this stage, You nearly just don't believe that this has actually happened and this thing you have been carrying around for years, you are actually going to be able to park it. I still think I'm in that space where I nearly don't realise the thing is fully done and I actually think now this will be my first summer in, I think, nine years. I think I'll understand it more then, when you are not doing stuff in the evenings and you can enjoy things and you will be out with the kids and there is no guilt around your homework that you are not doing. I think maybe I could answer that question better in another year, maybe, but I hope it does make, you get perceived and you feel different in time, perhaps, yeah.

While Davina's experience is still very recent we can see that she is looking forward to some personal time without the doctorate hanging over her. She also tells me that a friend told her that the shine never goes off having a doctorate. She then goes back to talking about the professional aspect of having the doctorate and explains that while she has always talked at conferences and seminars, they have been restricted to the field of librarianship. Now she has a hope that she can make a contribution to the wider field of education and she says that she might target conferences she wouldn't have targeted before. As she explains "you might be the only librarian there so I could see more that kind of thing happening so definitely that is a door to be opened".

Interestingly Davina also tells me that it was very important to her as a librarian to do the doctorate because traditionally it isn't done by librarians and people are still working out "the role that a librarian might play in that theoretical space". She goes on to point out that in the US there are plenty of librarians with doctoral degrees whereas in Ireland it is only now that people are thinking it's an obvious thing for librarians to do. By doing the doctorate she hopes that she can influence things and play a role in an emerging field.

Sonya too talks about the impact the doctorate has made to her life. She explains that because she changed jobs while she was doing the doctorate from a higher education institution to a government agency, she went through a crisis where she felt that the professional doctorate in education was not really relevant anymore to her work. Although she changed her research focus more directly to a work project she does believe that the doctorate informed that situation and there was definitely an influence there. She explains that while she continues to present at conferences it wouldn't be regarded as scholarship by the academic brethren she worked with previously. Instead she tells me that it is more about disseminating and sharing information. On a personal level she tells me that she finds it hard to use her title. She is working in a medical field where lots of her colleagues are medical doctors and so using her title can be confusing. While she says her husband is "a bit odd about it" or "a bit funny" about her using her title because she no longer works in academia, she is, she says, proud of her achievement.

> Do you know I just need to embrace it? It was a huge part of my life,
> eight, seven years went into it and I'm really proud of it.

Mary too is nearing the end of her doctoral journey and is starting to think about having the award and the title of Doctor. She tells me categorically that it won't have any impact on her working life but then later says that when she has completed her research evaluation and analysis she will probably put a paper to a conference. She does think the doctorate will have an absolute impact on her personally.

> Absolutely. I will be able to say no I don't want a title which I say already and the difference will be that the title will be Dr. Mary Fogarty rather than Mrs Mary Fogarty and I still don't want a title. Yeah I should do it, you know. I mean I don't intend for example to support myself going into consultancy after I retire. When I retire I am moving down to XXX to my three quarters of an acre of a garden. I'm going to grow tomatoes and rhubarb and potatoes and all the stuff we grow on the allotment now, I'm going to plant a little orchard and do a fruit cage.

> I have no wish to continue working. I mean, I was born to be a lady of leisure. Unfortunately it didn't turn out that way.

Although Patrick is only starting his doctoral journey, he does feel that it will have an impact on his work environment especially in terms of the changes that are happening in his institution. Also he believes that having the doctorate will give credibility to his conversations with external stakeholders and partnerships outside the institution. He believes that 'people look at titles' and in terms of management where it straddles the world of academia and administration and where people look at qualifications 'it can only help'. On a personal level he tells me that he always felt a sense of achievement after attaining a different level of qualification and he feels more confident already about his academic writing, reading and engagement with the literature. Furthermore he senses that his knowledge base is broadening and this has helped improve conversation and connections with people.

4.10.2 Sub-theme B: the professional doctorate versus the PhD

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Earlier in the literature review Servage (2009) argued that those students who choose to do professional doctorates are generally not seeking careers in the university and therefore the positional value or status of the professional doctorate degree is of less importance to them and also their employer. I'm not sure that I would agree with this argument in terms of professionals working in higher education and so I was particularly interested to see if any of the research participants would introduce this topic into their narratives and what their thoughts might be on a potential difference in status. Two of the research participants directly referred to a perceived difference between the professional doctorate and the PhD while all participants identified the professional doctorate as their doctorate of choice.

Siobhan tells me that when she started thinking about doing a doctoral qualification she had initially only considered the PhD route. When a colleague revealed she was pursuing the professional doctorate route Siobhan admits that her first thought was that it was an inferior qualification.

> And then I had that funny notion that I laugh at now but I had that funny notion that EdD isn't as good as a PhD anyway. I want PhD after my name not EdD and decided right well she is doing the EdD I'll start considering the PhD route, I'll do something different, do my own way.

She came back to thinking about the professional doctorate route again when her idea for a PhD fell apart.

> Do you know what, the EdD has its advantages in that it's bite sized pieces, it is two years of papers, you don't have to know your topic before you start because you have two years to figure out your topic and then it is a smaller thesis to start with then, so I thought it was a more achievable route.

Later she refers back to what she perceives as a lack of understanding and knowledge about the professional doctorate.

> I have to admit I still put Dr. Siobhan Dunphy rather than Siobhan Dunphy EdD. I don't think that's a snobbish thing but I don't think people understand EdD. I don't think that they see that or know that it is a doctorate to start with. Everyone recognises PhD, they know PhD is doctorate. I don't think EdD has become popular enough here maybe as it has in the States. I don't think it is known as well here and I think there is a, people do have an opinion about it not being as rigorous as the PhD and the thesis isn't as big and you don't have to do as much and at the end of the day you've written as much over the four or five or maybe six years as you would have done in PhD anyway.

Having now obtained the EdD she says that she is glad she chose the option she did and she is delighted that she did a professional doctorate "like I am professional, I see myself as a professional, I did a professional doctorate and I think if anyone asked would I recommend one, yes I would". She goes on to talk again about the perceived difference in the professional doctorate and the PhD and interestingly she perceives that academics and professional staff might have different perceptions on the argument, a thought which is echoed in the literature (Neumann, 2005).

> I think it would be interesting to see over the next couple of years whether it gains more attraction or whether it's seen as being on a par you know and from people of similar age as me who lecture here you'll hear the odd, who have PhDs, you'll hear the odd comment. I think it isn't really understood and it isn't really seen as being on a par with a PhD. It will be interesting to see if that changes.

> I suppose the professionals in terms of the non-academic professionals probably have no problem with it whatsoever, it's the academics. And it is the perception of the academic and the PhD and all that but again it's very historical, it's because of you know, that'll change, but yeah, I'm glad I decided.

Siobhan admits that when her colleague enrolled for a doctorate she would have been the only person left in the office without one and so this definitely put pressure on her and gave her the impetus, especially in terms of career progression, to apply for the doctorate. She also says that the particular EdD she chose was "handy" because it was taught locally.

Sonya brings up the topic of the different status between the professional doctorate and the PhD in several ways. She tells me firstly about the dilemma she faced when she changed jobs and how she was no longer sure that she should be doing an EdD because it seemed remote from what she was doing. Although she was trying to be open-minded and some of the lectures were interesting, she didn't identify with many of the subjects and wondered what she was doing there. She thought that she probably should switch to a PhD but after talking to the head of school at the time she was reassured and was convinced to stay on the EdD programme. This issue reared its head again when she was at her viva. The external examiner told her that it was a shame she hadn't done a PhD. She tells me she was thrown once again into confusion because she thought they were meant to be the same "so what did his question mean?"

This is a very interesting dimension to Sonya's story. She herself had questioned why she would continue doing an EdD after changing employment and to have this said to her at her Viva shows an appalling ignorance on behalf of her examiner. This view is however echoed in the literature with Wellington and Sikes (2006) among others reporting that their participants often talked about having to persuade others of the value of their professional doctorate and its parity of esteem with the PhD.

Sonya also tells me that she has stopped using the title of Doctor at work and instead puts EdD after her name in email correspondence. Although she is on the website as Doctor she explains that because she works with medical practitioners it has caused confusion in the past. She also admits that her husband "is a little bit odd" about her using the title Doctor because she is no longer working in academia. She also says that after finishing the doctorate, there have been some "funny effects" and that often

you do get "that whole it's not a PhD vibe" off some people. She tells me that she really needs to just embrace it because it took so many years of her life to do it.

Mary dropped out of two PhD programmes before enrolling on a professional doctorate. As she tells me neither of the PhD topics filed her with huge excitement and the PhD was not the right structure for her because she didn't like the idea of working on her own in isolation. She is now nearing completion but tells me that she deliberately chose to do the professional doctorate because she wanted connection and the group and class-based setting suited her. She tells me that for two years the group met every two weeks and they still stay in touch. In their study Wellington and Sikes (2006) also report participants dropping out of previous PhD programmes because they disliked the lack of structure and also the isolation and loneliness of the PhD route.

Patrick also mentions that he originally applied to do an EdD but that his application for funding was turned down by the President of the institution who wanted staff to have a mix of PhDs and professional doctorates. He had been drawn to the EdD model because of the way it was structured and also because of the twice yearly week long residential. Instead he chose a structured PhD which was similar in many ways to the EdD. He tells me that he didn't mind where he did it, he just wanted to have a doctorate and this model "killed two birds with one stone".

Davina doesn't talk about any perceived differences in the professional doctorate as opposed to the PhD but she does reveal that she chose the EdD model because she

wanted to do a part-time doctorate and she also wanted to do a doctorate in education as opposed to a doctorate in the field of librarianship and information science.

4.11 Reflecting on the narratives

The five research participants in this study were all employed as professional staff working in Irish higher education when they made the decision to pursue a doctorate in education. Although some of them were undertaking work practices more commonly associated with those of academic staff such as teaching or supervising students, none of the participants were employed on academic contracts or were considered by their institution to be academic staff. It is evident that with the major transition in contemporary higher education in Ireland and beyond, established institutional structures and boundaries have softened and become more fluid causing major shifts in the occupations and identity of professional staff working in higher education. Some scholars have argued that there has been a broadening out of professional identities and over time some of these professional staff have assumed greater personal agency, so "rather than simply acting out fixed roles in pre-determined job descriptions" they have made unique contributions by "building on their particular abilities, world-view and experience" (Whitchurch, 2006, p. 162). For some professional staff this has meant pursuing doctoral qualifications in an attempt to fulfil their particular aspirations and also improve their career mobility.

However, it is clear from scholarly voices in the literature (Bourner et al., 2001; Scott et al., 2004; Wellington and Sikes, 2006) that not all staff pursue the highest study at this level for reasons of career advancement. Scott et al. (2004) for example, found from their in-depth study on three particular professional doctorates, that in practice

doctoral students were extremely varied and present diverse and complex expectations across the spectrum of doctoral programme types, and they concluded that debates concerning learner motivation in general are complex. Interestingly they observed that the education profession is fragmented with individuals working in a number of very different settings and who belong to different bodies with different professional associations.

While this study pictures a moment in time within the Irish higher education system it is not representative of a single institution. Furthermore, as Goodson (2013, p. 25-26) reminds us "our study of human beings in any form whether it is their narratives or their nature cannot provide universals". As narrative researchers we are cognisant of the fact that our participants' stories are "intimately connected to cultural locations, to social position and even social privilege as well as to historical periods, which provide different opportunities for the construction and expression of selfhood". So while the data collected does not allow generalisations or strict statements, the narratives do provide some insights into why the participants have chosen to pursue doctoral study and also offers a look at some of the participants' earlier educational experiences and work experiences which I would argue have shaped their identity and ultimately influenced their decision to undertake a doctorate in education. These narratives are not being presented as unmediated "truth" but as insights that are of value in themselves.

It is perhaps useful at this point to look at what Anderson and Williams (2001) say about their experiences of gathering personal narratives for their work on identity. They claim that narratives are never straightforward and that in order to use narrative

inquiry as a research methodology we make assumptions and they are firstly, that experience is a legitimate source of knowledge; secondly that the participants' autobiography or narrative as relayed to an interviewer is part of an identity construction and reconstruction; and thirdly that the researcher themselves, influenced by a variety of different factors including their own social and political positioning, will select from the data they have and then prioritise certain experiences before interpreting and re-interpreting therefore adding another level of interpretation. Ultimately we retrospectively make sense of our changing identities by revisiting our past experiences and reinterpreting them from a "now" perspective using present understandings to reshape past experiences. As Goodson (2013, p. 30) argues "the personal story is an individualizing device if divorced from context" but here we see evidence of sociality as defined by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 69) as "the simultaneous concern with both personal and social conditions" and Dewey's notion of interaction where "people are always in interaction with their situations in any experiences". Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) also make clear that an important part of the sociality commonplace refers to the relationship between the researcher and their participant. The narrative inquirer will throughout the inquiry be in a relationship with the participant's life and cannot themselves be free of contextual influences.

In order to make this narrative inquiry more than just an exploration of five personal lives, I felt that it was essential to ask the research question within the context of the participants' early educational experiences and wider working and personal lives, thereby grounding the personal narratives in a wider social and historical context. As Bathmaker (2010, p. 9) points out good narrative research involves "an investment of the self" and furthermore good narratives should "reveal ambiguity rather than tidy it

away" (ibid, p. 2). I have chosen not to tidy away the themes and plots within the narratives above and therefore it is evident that for some participants difficult or unpleasant experiences in the past have influenced or constrained their actions in some instances. Other participants have exercised personal agency over their lives and have recognised and sometimes confronted social and cultural conventions. Mary for example as a child at primary school recognises the inequality of the school classroom and school yard while also understanding that her own circumstances are different and that her parents would not tolerate such behaviour aimed either at her or her brother. In a reversal much later in her life and career however, she feels bullied by her institution but has no power to address the issue. Instead she makes the decision to pursue a doctorate in education.

Bruner (2002) has said that often people don't pause to look at the narrative structures that characterize their lives. He has also made a distinction between a life that is lived, a life that is experienced and a life that is told. Other scholars have argued similarly that "neither a life story nor a life history is anything other than a representation of the life they concern" so clearly while the stories cannot be seen as the lives themselves they are "as close at it is possible to get" (Sikes and Goodson, 2016, p. 61). Ultimately all research is concerned with furthering understanding and making 'better' sense of the phenomenon under study (ibid, p. 63). In drawing my conclusions I am aware that this is my re-presentation of reality but others may see it differently because there can never be a definitive story.

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid out my findings from the data which was collected from the five research participants through interview and life grid methods. I have chosen to present the data in two parts. The first presentation of data, which can be found in Appendix A, stays close to Polkinghorne's (1995) notion of narrative inquiry where to reveal the unique and personal I introduce individual and illustrated re-storied narrative accounts from each research participant. The second presentation of data is an exploration and discussion of the themes which emerged throughout and across all five participant narratives including six main themes and a further twenty-four plot threads. The six main themes were: experiences of education; motivations for undertaking a doctorate in education; relationships; identity; support network; and the doctoral journey.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations
"I have come to the conclusion, after many years of sometimes sad experience,
that you cannot come to any conclusion at all."
(Vita Sackville-West, 1953)

5. Introduction

When I started this research project, it was with the intention initially of investigating the tension between research and teaching for academic staff based in Irish third level education. However, after stalling several times I came to a realisation that as a librarian working in higher education, to undertake such research was not really something I felt I could do with any passion and indeed it would not really be of interest to me or in my best interests. Around the same time I became aware that increasingly colleagues, peers and associates employed in a variety of professional roles within higher educational institutions in Ireland were enrolling on doctoral programmes in Ireland and beyond. Many of those people were undertaking doctorates in education and were being funded by their institutions to do so and yet, their motivations for pursuing a doctoral qualification remained underexplored both in their institutions and in the literature. As a professional librarian who has teaching responsibilities within my role and having also contributed to other areas of academia outside my area of librarianship, I particularly related to this group of staff and wanted to look more closely at their particular reasons for embarking on a doctoral qualification but also I wanted to delve more closely into some of the areas which may have influenced their decision making especially their earlier educational experiences but also elements of their personal and working lives. The main focus of this narrative inquiry then was to explore some of the reasons why staff in this group chose to pursue a doctorate in education and then to look further at some of their

experiences of the phenomenon in an attempt to address my three supplementary questions which were:

- To what extent do the narratives reveal a relationship between previous and present educational experiences?

- To what extent do the narratives show the impact of pursuing a doctorate on their personal and professional life?

- To what extent do the narratives reveal how the identities of professional staff are shaped and influenced by the relationships within their working environments?

I have used narrative inquiry as both the methodology and also the phenomenon under investigation with the intention of putting the voice of the participants and therefore their narratives at the forefront of this study. By using narrative as both the methodology and the phenomenon under investigation I recognise my own role in the construction and maintenance of the social world. In this chapter I revisit the findings from Part One and Part Two of Chapter Four to reveal what I regard as the main conclusions of this study. I will address firstly the main focus of this research which was to ascertain the main drivers for doctoral study by professional staff, but not academics, based in Irish third level institutions. I will then address the three supplementary questions before setting out the recommendations for further study.

5.1 Conclusions

In the second part of my presentation of data chapter, I identified six main themes and a further twenty-four sub-themes which emerged during the interviews and analysis of the life grid responses. The six main themes were: previous experiences of education;

motivations for undertaking a doctoral qualification; relationships; identity; support networks; and after the doctorate. Although they were not specifically identified as such, I would argue that all of the themes and sub-themes are relational in terms of motivations for undertaking doctoral research and in addition they answer the three supplementary questions to this study. Throughout their narratives the participants have revealed elements of their earlier educational experiences including both personal failings and achievements, and societal inequalities within the classroom and in the school yard; elements of their family life including difficulties with completing their doctorates while trying to maintain a semblance of normal family life; issues with childcare, financial matters and ill or elderly relatives; elements of changing institutional life and unjust practices within the workplace; elements of good and bad relationships within their institutions; and elements of their experiences within their working environment juggling work and life while under pressure to compete with colleagues who have already completed doctoral study.

5.1.1. To what extent do the narratives of professional staff working in Irish higher education reveal their motivations for pursuing a doctorate in education?

In analysing the narratives from my participants I have found unsurprisingly that motivations for undertaking doctoral study are complex and that there are multiple reasons why individuals pursue a doctorate in education. It became clear to me as the narratives developed that sometimes the initial response to the question was far from the whole picture. All participants were making their decisions within particular economic, political and social contexts and it is clear that no two doctoral students or their journey to the doctorate was the same. As Geertz (1973, p. 49) has observed "there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture", so each individual narrative reveals elements of their personal journey but also gives an insight into how

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their motivations were shaped by personal experiences including the "social, cultural, academic and economic capital" they possessed and were able to draw on (Wellington and Sikes, 2006, p. 732). There were five specific sub-themes which are directly related to the question why did you choose to do a doctorate in education? They are: credibility; dropout of college; peer pressure; professional development; and personal ambition and/or interest in the research area.

Although my sample group was small and therefore could not be considered to be representative of all education doctorate candidates, it was interesting to me that the conclusions of this study confirmed some of the findings of earlier studies such as those of Leonard et al. (2005), Scott et al. (2004) and Wellington and Sikes (2006). Scott et al. (2004, p. 133) found that experience was often used as a distinguishing characteristic of professional doctorates and they pinpoint examples of where students have undertaken doctoral study to reconcile past experiences in a process they describe as "coming to terms" with previous events, or as a point of closure particularly for experience that has been previously unacknowledged. This is evident in several of the participants' narratives but particularly that of Sonya who throughout her narrative talks about her experience of dropping out of college and the impact it made and continues to make on her life. As a result of her earlier experiences Sonya makes the decision to go back to college to study for a degree and then she continues on to do a Master's qualification closely followed by a doctorate in education. According to Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 69) narrative inquiry shares three commonplaces and they are "temporality, sociality and place". In Sonya's story we see evidence of temporality where it attends closely to Dewey's notion of continuity of experience. More simply put it is the idea that "experiences grow out of other

experiences" and "do not simply appear to be connected through time; they are continuous" (ibid, 2007, p.40).

In a study of education doctorate students Wellington and Sikes (2006) found that their informants privileged the personal and the social aspects of taking a professional doctorate and furthermore they argue that it was difficult to classify motivations as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Some of the findings of this study concur with those of Wellington and Sikes (2006) who argue that "critical incidents" in a student's past such as failing the 11 plus, or in the case of Sonya, dropping out of college, are significant and have a direct bearing on motivation for doctoral study. Additionally they have argued that "what happened to us in the past affect the things that happen to us in the future" and that often when participants claim that they have chosen to pursue a doctorate primarily for reasons of professional development or because of peer or institutional pressure, other more personal reasons are also present (ibid, p. 732). Again we can relate this to Mary's narrative where we discover her first two failed attempts to complete a PhD and then follow her story through as we learn that her institution is undergoing a period of major change which directly influences her working experience and identity and rather than simply disappear into the new and uncomfortable space created for her she decides to undertake a doctorate in education, reaching out for a shared group experience of doctoral study where she can be in a community of learners, a decision she insists she made "for me" but one which could also be seen as a retaliatory action against the upheaval in her institution.

We learn of other tensions inherent in the decisions to pursue doctoral education such as the issue of credibility and also peer and institutional pressure, the second and third

sub-theme to be identified. To some extent these themes are present in all of the narratives and interestingly there was a definite cross-over between them. Siobhan for example, revisits her earlier idea of doing a PhD when faced with being the only one in her office without a doctoral qualification and exercising her agency, decides to pursue the education doctorate seeking both personal and professional affirmation. We learn also that Patrick feels under pressure by his institution to have the same qualification as his peers especially as his institution moves towards technological university status, but he also tells us that he wants the doctorate for credibility, so that he can sit at the table with his stakeholders and feel that the title means something. Davina's narrative reveals that she sat at a table with her academic colleagues and peers and felt the absence of the doctorate. Although she initially says that she was motivated to do the doctorate because as a librarian she was helping others with their studies and wanted to feel their pain, it becomes clear that this isn't the whole picture. At several points she refers to the doctorate as a currency to trade in within higher education and admits that she wanted to "be at the table and to have it like everybody else in the room". Davina also articulates the idea that while librarians contribute to the larger digital landscape they are still on the periphery of higher education and her narrative reveals that she wants the professional literature surrounding librarianship to be discussed within the wider academic community and therefore the higher education literature. The fact that she needs to articulate this is interesting in that it says something about her own life story, identity and power. What comes across is that either for reasons of acceptance, equality or recognition, Davina believes that as a librarian she needs the doctorate for reasons of credibility and currency. Undoubtedly our life story influences our identity and can either strengthen or weaken our sense of agency.

Professional development was cited by all the participants as a reason for undertaking the doctorate but throughout the narratives we see that it is always in conjunction with other drivers. Siobhan tells us that she did the doctorate for reasons of professional development but she also reveals that she only came back to thinking about doing a PhD when all members of her team at work either already had a doctorate or had recently enrolled on a programme so there is clear evidence too of peer pressure. Patrick also cites professional development as the reason for undertaking a doctorate but as discussed previously we also learn that there are other drivers for his decision.

The last sub-theme identified was that of personal ambition and /or interest in a particular research area. Across all the narratives it is clear that personal ambition plays a part, although only two participants stated this directly, and several narratives also reveal a particular interest in a research area. Mary is adamant that she had undertaken the doctorate simply for herself. She also expressed interest in a particular research area that she was very interested in pursuing, but a closer look at her narrative shows that other factors come into play such as her first two failed attempts to do a PhD, her sense of isolation in her working environment, her role as the main breadwinner at home, and also her anger at management within her institution for side lining her role and area of responsibility during a period of reform. Sonya's narrative shows both personal ambition and also an interest in a specific research area particularly because she felt that her Master's "didn't adequately challenge" her and she wanted to explore the theory behind her topic to a greater intellectual depth.

5.1.2. To what extent do the narratives reveal a relationship between previous and present educational experiences?

At the beginning of every interview I began by asking each participant to tell me something about their experiences of education. I didn't specify this further because I

wanted each participant to interpret the question based on their own perception and experience. Only one of the participants asked me to clarify in what sense was I referring to education and I simply asked her to take whatever meaning she wanted from the question. What was interesting in their responses was the way they all began to tell the story of their educational experiences from primary through to third level illustrating an ability to understand and produce coherent narratives in a process Baddeley and Singer (2007, p. 182) refer to as "autobiographical reasoning, the process by which the life story is constructed and applied". In particular, the participants show two types of coherence identified and defined by Habermas and Bluck (2000) as temporal coherence which is the ability to chronologically organize events that have occurred over time and the cultural concept of biography which shows an understanding both of the normative sequence of life events (in this case schooling comes before career) and the kind of information that is and is not appropriate to include in the life story. Additionally what was evident to me was the link between their early educational experiences and their onward journey to the doctorate. In some cases this was more obvious, for example, Mary and Sonya both dropped out of third level courses at several junctures and it seemed inevitable in their narratives that they would eventually return because they felt that their journey was not complete or had been interrupted in some way. Sonya in particular seemed to exhibit autobiographical reasoning when she states that it is now time to accept the path she took in life and "own" her experiences even if it wasn't how she had originally imagined her life. The other three participants continued on to secondary, through to undergraduate and then postgraduate and beyond, seemingly uninterrupted but once again a closer examination showed that two of the candidates had a crisis of sorts. Patrick only revealed after I probed him during the life grid exercise, that he had

entered the priesthood for a period and had later dropped out while we learn that Siobhan revered her older sister when she was growing up and had subsequently followed her into a teaching career which turned out to be the wrong choice for her and made her very unhappy. She then spent the next few years pursuing different educational qualifications as a means of escaping primary school teaching. Davina too shows determination to have a career in higher education and tells me that she chose that path deliberately because it was where she wanted to be. She shows the same determination when pursuing the doctorate. What comes across in all the narratives is a strong desire to succeed and a determination to use educational means to achieve that success.

5.1.3. To what extent do the narratives show the impact of pursuing a doctorate on their personal and professional life?

All participants were invited to share their experiences of undertaking the doctorate. I found that the responses to this question were multiple and some of the common threads were support, relationships, identity, and also the doctoral journey. What was interesting again was the enactment of the multiple identities here, in particular that of the woman/worker/mother where we heard two of the participants detail their difficulties with finding the time and space to study and we also hear of financial concerns, support issues, carer issues, interruption of family life, etc. While we see evidence of each participant's unique personal concerns we also see how those concerns are never in isolation from interpersonal and sociocultural concerns. This is apparent in Siobhan's narrative where we learn of her struggles to stay on track with her doctorate in spite of pregnancy, her husband's job loss during the financial crash in Ireland, financial issues and problems getting her full-time position back after

working a job-share arrangement for a short time. Despite all the difficulties Siobhan completes her doctorate within five years.

Furthermore, Davina's narrative struck me here especially when she reflects on how hard it was to 'keep the show on the road' and how the doctorate took her away from her children who regarded the thesis as a bad word and as something that took their mum away from them - 'thesis equals absence'. Baddeley and Singer (2007) suggest that at the end of our lives we are ready to return our life story to the culture from which it began and reflecting on Davina's narrative I could see evidence that she was passing her story on to her children in the hope that they would see the work that went into it, understand that a doctorate was achievable for them and that it was something of value. As she says "I know for all our children in time they will go, 'wow mum is a doctor', but like, so you just hope that bit outweighs the thesis versus absence bit when they are this young because it is hard and as a woman you do feel it like".

5.1.4. To what extent do the narratives reveal how the identities of professional staff are shaped and influenced by the relationships within their working environments?

Our stories are gathered from all social influences and from our experiences with others. While these influences and relationships will guide our life stories in particular directions ultimately individuals will give their cultural tales a "fresh voice filtered through their idiosyncratic life experience and personal memory" (Baddeley and Singer, 2007, p. 178). Identity was identified as a major theme running through all of the narratives with four associated sub-themes which were; (a) being a professional (b) labelling (c) identity within third level institutions and (d) being a female in higher education. What stood out for me across all the narratives was firstly the coherency of

the accounts and secondly the multiple identities enacted and projected at any particular time. As Scott et al. (2004) have observed higher education provides a space for changing identities but this space is not limited to students, all groups of staff working in higher educational institutions are also afforded this space and opportunity. In the narrative accounts above we have seen a variety of identities including but not limited to parents, partners, women, professional workers, breadwinners, carers and doctoral students. For some the process of entering doctoral education starts a process of self-definition and we can see how for some of the participants a clash between multiple identities, such as that of mother, worker and student, has impacted considerably on their doctoral experiences. Several studies have found that doctoral students have to carefully balance multiple roles and responsibilities, both personal and professional, as they navigate their journey to completion (Denicolo and Pope, 1994; Wellington and Sikes, 2006). It is inevitable then that the identities of the participants in this study will have been impacted not only by their experience of being a doctoral student but also because they are working in professional capacities within higher education. Barnett and Di Napoli (2008, p. 204) have commented on what they call the fragmentation of the university where increasingly disparate communities and sub-communities in the university "have differing identities, different sets of value positions and different sets of understandings of academic life" without a common identity or bridge between them. They also acknowledge that higher education itself has the "space to determine the space that they will accord different identities" and as evident in the participants' narratives above, individuals within higher education have also "space imaginatively to interpret their positions, and to express their voice, and even to widen or change their identities".

All of the participants with the exception of Mary seemed to have a clear picture of their role and identity within their institution. Mary's identity had been fractured because of the major restructuring in her institution and she no longer felt valued. All the participants spoke about working with different staff groupings within their institution and for the most part these relationships were positive and "very, very good" and "natural". A sense of "otherness" came through however in some of the accounts such as that of Mary who said "they don't like it when…" referring to the academics who were happy to talk about academics and non-academics but baulked at the terms professional and non-professional to describe academic departments. Siobhan also talks about how a job title can place value on your role or not within the institution and she believes the term "academic" has snobbish connotations. It is evident from Siobhan's narrative that she has a clear understanding of her own identity and believes that what others think of her contributes to how she views herself and her identity. Yet we learn there have been occasions when her team, who do academic work even though they are not classified as academics, are sometimes treated poorly by academic staff members and Siobhan explains this by telling me that "I think because we are seen very much as, like we are admin staff in (names institution) eyes even though we do academic work". It strikes me that Siobhan identifies more strongly with the academic side of her role, even though her role is not classified as academic and this could explain why she takes umbrage at being treated as though she were "admin staff". Siobhan is also the only participant to mention the third space as it applies to her within her professional working life, agreeing that it is apt for her circumstances.

Davina's narrative is also interesting in regard to this question because while she identifies very clearly as part of the higher education community, it is evident that she doesn't believe that librarianship as a profession is yet part of that community and we learn that when attending meetings with her peers she felt the absence of the doctorate. There is evidence that Davina is renegotiating her own identity within her higher education institution and using the doctorate as her currency to do so. Patrick too is creating his own space within his institution by using the doctorate to gain credibility in his dealings with outside stakeholders and where he feels that the title Doctor of Education will mean something.

5.2 Recommendations

In drawing this study to a close, I now present some recommendations arising from the research and also highlight some potential areas for further research.

State spending on higher education in Ireland has fallen drastically over the last decade and although in Budget 2017 there was a significant funding increase it still fell well short of the figure that is needed to boost the standing of the sector (O'Brien, 2016). These persistent cuts to the budgets of all HEIs in Ireland have led to a moratorium on spending in many areas of activity including professional development opportunities for staff especially for external funding of courses and programmes such as doctoral study. Participants in this study were all funded by their institutes to undertake their EdD but only one of them was asked officially by someone in their institution what had motivated them to do a doctorate in education in the first instance, and how it could contribute to their particular area of work or to the work of the institution. Throughout the doctoral process the institutional support mechanism

for each participant varied significantly depending on the institution and in most cases their line manager. While some received generous time off to attend class and weekend schools, others received the standard annual five days with no other concessions given. Furthermore on completion of the doctorate three participants returned to the same role with one participant given additional responsibilities with no reward as a result of obtaining her doctorate in education. While some participants mentioned the collegiality of the doctoral experience this was limited to their experiences of taking part in the weekend schools associated with their cohort and not associated with being part of the research community within their organisation. One participant approached the President of the HEI where she had worked and which had previously funded her bachelor degree, her Master's and the early part of her EdD, to initiate a conversation about how she might contribute to the organisation now that she had gained her doctorate but her email was dismissively forwarded to Human Resources without any attempt made to engage further.

I recommend that Irish HEIs take account of the increasing number of professional staff within their organisations who are undertaking professional doctorates either within or outside the organisation. These doctoral students are carrying out their research studies while continuing to balance their roles and responsibilities from all areas of their lives and they need to be valued and supported on a formal and coherent basis by their employer. Furthermore, institutions need to be cognisant of the need to gather relevant data pertaining to the motivations and aspirations of all staff groups who choose to undertake doctoral study. This data, especially if gathered across Irish HEIs by way of a longitudinal study, could provide a vast bank of information being made available not only to inform the development of professional doctorate

provision, but also to examine the value and contribution doctoral graduates make to their higher education workplaces. Although this research study did not look at possible links to retention at doctoral level in terms of the individual drivers for doctoral study, there is an opportunity for institutions to look more closely at this area to establish whether initial motivations are a factor either in completion or drop-out.

5.3 Areas for further research

Coming to the end of this study it is too easy to look back and speculate about what I could or should have done differently. Instead I see opportunities for future research which can only enhance our understanding of doctoral student motivation and contribute to the scholarly literature on issues pertaining to it such as identity, professional development and retention in higher education. This study looked at doctoral student motivation from the perspective of professional staff groups, other than academics, based in Irish HEIs however it could be a useful study to investigate one of these groups in more detail such as academic developers or librarians, or even to compare the motivations of professional and academic staff either as a case study in one institution or across Irish HEIs. What is apparent is that this area remains underexplored in the literature, especially in an Irish context, and yet as mentioned above, a longitudinal study in Ireland could contribute vast information to our understanding for government, educationalists, scholars and higher education managers. For example, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study across Irish HEIs with the purpose of following doctoral students as they embark on the process: gathering their motivations and aspirations at the outset; checking in at regular intervals throughout to see how they are progressing; assessing possible contributory factors both to drop-out and completion; and then following up on

students one year after completion (including those students who dropped out) to investigate the impact if any, the doctorate has had either in their personal or professional lives.

5.4 Final words

This study focusses on the experiences of five professional staff working in Irish higher education, all of whom chose to do a doctorate in education, and whose reasons for doing so are unique to them. It draws on the philosophical thoughts of John Dewey, who saw that an individual's experience was a central lens for understanding a person. I have not attempted to generalise or make implicit statements about the findings, nonetheless the insights into their personal and professional experiences while undertaking their journey, are profound and of value in themselves. As Anderson and Williams (2001, p. 7) have observed, a "typical" student or doctoral student does not exist because of the "complexity of differences experienced by those so labelled" and therefore they conclude "if there is no unified subject there can be no 'truth' or grand theory about the student experience". This concluding chapter has highlighted the findings from this narrative inquiry and proposed some recommendations for the area of practice and for future research.

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"If you steal from one author it's plagiarism; if you steal from many it's research"

(Wilson Mizner, 1953)

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Appendices

Appendix A

Presentation of data part 1: Narrative accounts of participants

A narrative account of Mary

Our first meeting was in a coffee shop in a rather salubrious Dublin city hotel where we found a quiet corner and drank tea. Mary managed to resist the allure of a scone with cream and jam, but referred longingly to the scones several times throughout the course of the interview. Mary had been identified to me as a doctoral student by another participant. Before the interview began, we worked together to complete the life grid and as we chatted over the exercise, Mary began to tell me her narrative. Although I hadn't intended to record the conversation during the completion of the life grid, I asked for and received her permission to start recording.

Background

Mary is a married woman in her late 50s who lives with her husband and son in the large South Eastern Irish town where she grew up. She works in a large Irish university as a senior administrator and is currently undertaking a doctorate in education from her own institution, which she is hoping to complete within the next twelve months. She was born in Ireland to an Irish mother and a British father, and she has one sibling. Her family moved to the town where she now lives, when she was a child.

Going to school

When asked at the beginning of the interview to tell me about her experiences of education and how they relate to her decision to do a doctorate, Mary responds:

> Yeah, I'm not a great fan of education and on the other hand I am hugely committed to it. I would say I didn't enjoy primary school, I didn't enjoy secondary school. I didn't really much like university.

At primary school Mary felt that she and her sibling were outsiders. She recognised from a young age the inequality of the school environment and throughout her interview she returns again and again to this theme. As a pupil she was aware that how you speak has a huge role in how you are treated in life, especially at school and by the teachers. She felt that both she and her sibling were fortunate in that her parents spoke well.

> My parents had very, very nice accents right, my dad a slightly Scottish accent and my mother a very sort of received pronunciation accent.

> A lot of how you are treated in school is to do with how you speak and you know we were actually ok. Neither of us was sort of particularly beaten up or particularly chastised or given out to. We also had parents who would not tolerate any sort of inappropriate behaviour but it wasn't an equal space.

This theme, where Mary looks in at the unfortunate experiences of other pupils while remaining protected by her own parents and family background emerges and continues throughout her narrative. She talks about a poem that she read some years ago which tells the story of a returner to education recounting her experience as a young girl where she had been tortured at school and had wet herself and had then been paraded around school and shamed. Mary then tells a similar story about a young girl in her class who is punished because she forgets to wear a head covering to church.

> A little girl in my class had gone to confession and she had gone into the church on Saturday to go to confession and she had nothing covering her head. She wasn't wearing her mantilla as we used to call them and she was paraded around the school and made a show of, you

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know, and a year later, nobody was wearing head covering so why did
she have to suffer?

While Mary does not recall any incidents which personally involve her or her sibling, this theme of inequality and injustice runs throughout her interview as she talks about her educational experiences as a child both in primary and secondary school. She refers to Ireland then as a "sexist society" and talks about the lack of equality in the classroom and in society generally for women. She moves on then to talk about her experiences of secondary school where she tells me the inequality continues. She was aware that lots of children were going to leave school at age fourteen "and they weren't getting an education and of course there was still corporal punishment".

> Anyway secondary school wasn't much better. I mean I did ok but
> there wasn't enough to really spark your interest and your creativity.

Going to third level education

Throughout the interview, Mary refers often to her lack of enjoyment of many of her educational experiences. Having left school both she and her brother went off to the same college the same year "both on county council grants". She completes a three year degree in University College Dublin then starts a Masters but she drops out. In her explanation to me she cites financial concerns and also dissatisfaction with her choice of research topic and her supervisor. Mary states that she wasn't the first person in her family to go to university, and if she had been the first, then she wouldn't have gone. While "there was a lot that was good about it" it wasn't her "favourite experience in the world". There followed some months working in a "permanent, pensionable" secretarial position for a local hospital, then several training courses with FAS (Irish National Training and Employment Authority) before she decides to do a Primary School teaching qualification at a College of Education in a

small city in Ireland. She says "they did a good training you know, but it was very different from the university setting but it was cheap. Your fees were paid and they gave you a €50 book allowance and it was full board. You see I was well tuned in. I couldn't afford to, you know, sort of set out and find accommodation and all that, so I did it". Several times throughout the interview Mary alludes to a lack of money or funding of her higher education experiences. She goes on to describe the college as '"big and anonymous" and she describes again a sexist environment where there were lots of men particularly priests on campus.

Mary completes her teaching qualification and states that "she became a teacher by default because it was the cheapest career to get into, not out of a sort of love for education but I would say, you know, I wasn't a bad teacher". She also tells me that she copped on very early to what she considers a fundamental principle in education, 'absolutely fundamental, and that was the ability to be able to see this sort of six year old or five year old or twelve year old as your absolute equal in everything except the specific knowledge you were there to teach'. For four years she teaches in a rural primary school in Ireland before deciding "out of desperation rather than dedication" to do a Master's in Trinity College Dublin. She comes "in first place out of the most competitive group in years and loved every minute of it" describing her experience there as "intellectually challenging" and a "cosseted, wonderful programme" where she "discovered, rediscovered" that she could write well. At this point in her life she says she "was on the lookout for something that would be about changing the world rather than just understanding it". The course at Trinity she describes as the "best educational experience of my life".

Working in higher education

Mary took on some Higher Education teaching roles in Dublin before changing tack altogether, meeting her now husband before then moving to Northern Ireland with him and taking up a research position with a university in the area of institutional research into teaching quality "I used to call it the snoop job because it was sort of quality assurance then but anyway I got the job which was important". She stayed in this position for eighteen months before leaving to take up a new post at Queens University in Belfast. She stayed in this post for six years working again in quality assurance, a job she enjoyed, gathering a team around her and developing staff development courses for academic departments. She was trying to develop both internal and external self-assessment processes for staff to improve teaching practices. As she says "I do believe in teams" and throughout the interview she refers to "we" when talking about significant achievements in her career.

> I think we did change matters but the 'we' is very important. I am a team worker. I don't believe in the single inspirational leader. I believe in teams of people working together to make things better.

Furthermore she believes that the university, which has since gone on to become one of the Russell Group universities, would never have done so well on the research side if the teaching side had not improved so much, contributing to their rising profile.

> I mean we worked hard and we worked well, we worked smartly and yes I think we did have an impact because teaching was very definitely in the ha'penny place, you know, and yet you had people who loved teaching.

She describes this post as being a different kind of work "sort of the first job of a career", "permanent and pensionable". She also reveals that she took immediate advantage of the maternity leave she was offered with the post and had her son, but wished that she could have availed of the maternity leave more often. She implies

here that she would have loved more children but doesn't elaborate on whether it was because of financial or biological reasons that she didn't.

After eight years in Northern Ireland, she decided to move home to the Republic of Ireland because her mother was becoming elderly. She was successful in obtaining a job in the institution where she now works and at the time was given responsibility for a large administrative area. She had initially gone for a different position which she didn't get but weeks later the university rang her and offered her another position working in the area of quality assurance. Initially the atmosphere was positive and there was "a great energy" around the campus and "a great sort of commitment to teaching".

Discord

Mary goes on to talk at some length about her current position in the university where she now works. Due to major restructuring in the institution there have been significant changes in her job. As she says about her role in the institution "I don't feel either wanted or valued". She also believes that the institution is "getting more and more sexist as the years go by".

> There are lots of things I think that contribute to not being valued in a place and I think being female is one of them, you know, you often sort of say to yourself, God, if you are female they think secretary and they don't value secretaries.

Mary goes on to talk about some major issues in her current role but asks that I don't refer to them in print. What seems clear is that she is deeply unhappy in her role and feels that she has been side-lined within the institution.

Choosing to do a doctorate

During the period Mary spent working in Northern Ireland she made "two attempts to do a doctorate", one in the area of Philosophy, the other in the area of Education, dropping out each time. The attempts were ten years apart and she explains that it wasn't the right format for her and "to be dead honest now neither of them filled me with huge excitement so anyway".

Mary tells me that she feels isolated in her current role, and so feeling a need to stay connected she decided that she would undertake an EdD. She explains that she liked the idea of it being class based and also the idea of participating in a group who would meet regularly every week for the duration of the course:

> I wanted connection so the group based suited me.

> Why am I doing it? I'm doing it for me.

Supporting the doctorate

Mary explains that throughout the doctoral process her institution have supported her in the sense that they have given her the time off to attend classes and they have continued to waive her fees in her fourth year of her studies (she took a year out because of ill health). However, she makes clear that no one in a position of authority has spoken to her about her thesis to ask how she is getting on or even what it is about. She also doesn't get study leave but she says that if she sat in her office twenty four hours a day writing her thesis, no one would notice or question her.

> That's enough of an answer to that one.

In a personal capacity she says that friends have asked her why she bothers and some have said "oh for God's sake, get it done, just do it, so they are very supportive!" Her husband is busy "minding his demented mother" and so "he has enough on his plate".

Achieving the doctorate and standout moments

When I asked Mary at the end of the interview to tell me about particular happenings or experiences that stood out for her during her career in education and her pursuit of a doctoral qualification, she answered that for her "equality is absolutely the thing that I have learned, the most important thing". Furthermore she said that "all the sort of experiences where equality was much offended against, are also important". She tells me that when she was asked by the President of a University at a previous job interview what she thought was the most important lesson that she has learned throughout her somewhat varied career, Mary replied that we are all equal.

> I said, you know, that when I had been a primary school teacher I just thought I have to view this seven year old as my absolute equal apart from the fact that I know things that he or she doesn't know. I sort of went on to say to him that I thought that this was important because when you are working in a situation where you had to achieve goals with people where you had no managerial authority to be able to look them in the eye, and know that you are their absolute equal and they are your absolute equal. It was hugely freeing that it didn't matter whether I was speaking to the cleaner who cleaned my office or the president of the university, in my view they were equal. It was only sort of later I thought God you just told him, you know, that you think that he is exactly equal to the cleaning lady and he gave me the job which meant, you know, that he was okay with that.

Mary goes on to tell me that when she achieves her doctorate she doesn't intend to do anything with it and she has no plans to go into consultancy after she retires. Instead she describes how she intends to grow vegetables and fruit in her large garden in the country and perhaps take up knitting and patchwork. As she says:

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I wouldn't mind sort of doing a bit of editing just for the pleasure of reading because if you have to edit you see to read it. I have no wish to continue working. I mean, I was born to be a lady of leisure. Unfortunately it didn't work out that way.

A narrative account of Siobhan

Our interview took place in a city centre location. We met in a small meeting room beside Siobhan's office in the third level institution where she is employed. Siobhan completed and returned by email a very comprehensively completed Life Grid before the interview. The Life Grid was discussed at several points throughout the interview.

Background

Siobhan is a female in her early forties, married with two children, and working full-time as a learning development officer in a large higher institution in Ireland. She recently completed a Doctorate in Education from a British university.

Going to school

When asked at the beginning of the interview to tell me about her experiences of education and her decision to do a doctorate, Siobhan began by saying that she was always amazed that she had ended up working in education and how she wasn't sure that it was a natural route for her but rather a "forced journey". She begins sharing stories from her childhood particularly her desire to emulate everything her idol, an older sister by ten years, did. Her older sister expressed an interest to be a teacher and so Siobhan too wanted to be a teacher. As she says:

> I think if you say something often enough it really just, it sticks, and
> so it was always kind of accepted I think, well Siobhan wants to be a
> teacher and you know we played the same musical instrument and we
> had the same music teacher and a lot of our lives were quite similar in
> a way.

So although she says that her own primary education had not been a happy one, "I wouldn't look back and say they were the best days of my life by any stretch of the imagination" she "ended up in primary teaching anyway, got through the course

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without any difficulty whatsoever that wasn't a problem but I suppose I was teaching, within the first year of teaching, I kind of very quickly decided it wasn't really where I kind of felt at twenty I wanted to be".

Third level education

Siobhan then describes how she felt that there was a lack of progression in primary school teaching and not really anything else she could do except teach at primary school level. As she says "because you know you are not taken seriously as a vice principal or principal really until you are kind of in your forties or fifties. No one is going to hire a twenty year old as a principal unless it is a one teacher school in the middle of absolutely nowhere like, so at twenty there was nothing else to do so that was when I decided I'd go on and do my Masters". She makes it clear that with her Bachelor of Education she felt stuck in a rut in education. She thought doing a Master's in Education would get her out of the classroom and possibly "open up a few extra kind of doors, I could do something else". At the end of the M. Ed she ended up back in the classroom. As she says:

> I realised that well it's kind of principalship you're kind of looking at
> so I ended up back in the classroom again you know. That's why I did
> the MSc in Computers and Technology because I developed an
> interest in the IT end of it through a particular module we had to do on
> the M. Ed. I kind of saw well maybe that's my way out, maybe I can
> get into the IT and education side which is new and it's changing and
> there will be roles and it might get me out of the school you know and
> it did. I ended up here.

She wonders out loud if circumstances had been different and she hadn't wanted to be like her sister so much, would she have gone down a different career path like dentistry or nursing? She also expresses amazement that she got her current post at the time because she felt strongly coming from a primary school background that they

wouldn't take her seriously. She believes it was because everything was so new, and the area was new and she had just finished her Masters. As she states "I think I just hit it at the right time". She saw the ad in the paper and thought "ah here, this might work you know but I suppose I'm still amazed I actually got into it but now that I'm in it like I love it and I am happy now, I suppose you could say I am very happy in what I do and I'm good at what I do. I don't have an ego about it but I know I'm good at what I do".

Working in higher education

Siobhan goes on to explain her current role as a Learning Development Officer and the involvement she has with other professionals both in her area and in other areas of the institution. She states that her role is constantly changing and that at times "you kind of end up doing what needs to be done type of thing". At times she says she feels like a very well paid helpdesk support person. She talks in detail about some of her daily routines suggesting that her team are busy and involved with teaching staff in the institution looking at "blended learning, developing online modules". She elaborates further:

> providing leadership support to staff as they transition from face to face to embedding technology and embedding mobile learning, enhancing and further transforming their activities, we're involved in programme redesign, new programmes will come to us as well, getting programme documentation together, it is really, really varied, it is everything to do with everything that's learning and teaching with an emphasis on the technology side of it I suppose. And we're meant to be involved in research as well. Doing it all and supervising others so it's kind of a bit of everything.

Discord

During the interview Siobhan alludes to some conflict within her immediate work environment. She briefly explains what happened. As she says "we've pulled back

from that a little, it's very political I suppose so I have moved on from that, there is a lot going on about contracts and roles and pay and parity and all the rest of it and maybe that will probably come up later I'd imagine, but so we're not doing too much on programmes". A particular conflict is also addressed in the life grid where Siobhan goes into more detail about the specifics of a situation where she had decided to job share her role (she decided that she wanted to job share in order to spend more time with her children while studying for her doctorate) and then when she was ready to resume the full-time position again she faced conflict over the ownership of the full-time position. As she puts it "I experienced huge difficulties in getting my job back and it looked like I'd end up in the Labour Court". Later in the interview she asks me if there is anything in the life grid that I would like her to expand on and I mention the job-share experience. She immediately elaborates and starts to tell me in more detail about why she chose to job-share explaining that her first child was in crèche from eight in the morning until six at night and as a family they decided they didn't want that and so she chose to have some time at home which coincided with her working on the doctorate. She says that it probably made it easier to do the EdD and "that at least I was at home that day although you're knackered". Her husband to a certain extent took over in the evenings to allow her time to do an hour or so and then again at weekends.

Siobhan spent four years job sharing and her employer argued that she owned only half of the post even though she was the main post holder and still held that contract. This was eventually resolved by the Human Resources department of the institution. As Siobhan says the mess to get her job back probably made her a lot more cynical about the place and "encouraged the attitude of it's a paycheque you know, I'll do my

hours and it's a paycheque" and again, "instances like that do have an impact on how you feel". Her dealings with HR made her feel that "you're paper, you're a number, you are an employee, you have a contract, they are not looking at your role, they have no connection with you, there is no rapport there, there is no nothing, you know". She relays the stress of that time. Her husband had lost his job, as a family they needed her to resume full-time employment and then she was called for her Viva.

Collaboration and relationships

Siobhan then goes on to talk about working with other professionals with her organisation. She talks about being involved in the planning and organising of large institution wide projects especially with particular funding projects where "different types of professionals" are expected to be involved from within and outside the institution "and up and down levels and all sorts of arrangements or staff". She talks about the varying amounts of influence she may have on certain projects at certain times and gives some specific examples of where she has worked in different roles with different types of staff groups. Siobhan tells us that:

> some of the academics would see us very much as the hired help OK and you do get those kinds of calls and do this for me now it is to be done by 5 o' clock I've students coming in at 10 past you know and it has to be done today and why isn't it done now and yesterday, you know this type of thing? And you get the odd email that almost makes you cry like the work I put into that and I get this snotty reply back so I think because we are seen very much as, like we are admin staff in (names institution) eyes even though we do academic work.

She adds "I think some academic staff see us very much as the help, the admin and we do stuff for them". Siobhan points out though that often it is a reciprocal relationship where she may do something for someone who will then reciprocate by helping them with a joint project further down the line. As she says:

> Relationships generally are very, very good. I think the academics appreciate us an awful lot more than heads of departments or heads of schools. I think staff generally, the academic staff, lecturing staff, hold us maybe in higher regard than management might. I don't think that management see what an important role we play really. I don't think they realise that if we got pulled and the whole lot was retired off, what a hole we'd leave, maybe it is because of how we work, we work quite seamlessly with their lecturers.

And again:

> In terms of stories, like you get lovely emails from people just saying thank you so much for doing that. You get lovely voice mails I really appreciate the work you did on that for me yesterday and they keep you going you know and you forget about the ones that are negative you know.

Being valued in a professional role

Recently Siobhan has not felt as valued in her role. A lot of this stems from the conflict that she mentions earlier in the interview where she had to fight to get back her full-time position after changing to a temporary job-share arrangement. She says that she feels valued by certain people and not so much by others and doesn't feel at all valued by the institution particularly in the current environment of major change within the institution and lack of financial and employment security. She explains that the lack of information and lack of attention from management has exacerbated the general feeling of "being unloved" or being "at the bottom of the pile" within lots of departments. With regard to her immediate working environment she puts some of the lack of value down to possible personality clashes, some historical factors and also to the lack of parity in employment contracts within her own centre. She explains that a recent merger has left her particular sub-team who had previously made great progress, unable to move forward.

> There is only so much of being kept down that you can put up with when you start to feel devalued or you start to feel your role just isn't as important when you can't see that you have achieved anything this

year that's any different to two years ago whereas we were making great strides in the 10 years up to that you know. God I'm coming across fierce negative altogether.

The third space

Siobhan introduces the term 'third space' in the interview when she tells me that while the institute wants her team to become involved in academic work and the "research side of things" including supervising students and lecturing, they refuse to reclassify their contracts. As she says:

> now I think that we are very much like this, have you come across the expression in the third space? I think since I've come across that, the more I see they are dead right, we're very much. I don't think institutes know what to do with us really and a lot of that is kind of historical as well.

She goes on to talk about her identity and how words that are used to describe her job position make a difference. She uses the example of the term "officer" as one "we" never liked "because you feel very much down the line there, a few pegs down" and again, "you feel you've been put down a few pegs don't you? It's funny how words can affect you". She uses a further specific example within her team where "learning officer" and "e-learning officer" are titles that can cause friction and make "you feel that one is valued differently maybe to the other". This thought is expanded further:

> Whereas you have no problem with someone in the different institute being called instructional designer because you know damn well they do the same job and it doesn't matter that they are called something else. I think how you are viewed by others or how you are viewed by the lecturer it develops your identity as in like I know I play an important role in a lot of people's jobs okay because you know by the calls you get, the emails you get, they can't do some of the stuff they want to do without your input, without your support, your help, your leadership or whatever so I know, I suppose, how do you put it? I don't think my title bothers me.

Later on in the interview Siobhan starts to discuss the life grid and some of the things that she wrote there. She begins to talk about the idea of being a professional and says "actually I'm delighted I did the EdD. Like I am professional I see myself as a professional, I did a professional doctorate and I think if anyone asked me would I recommend one yes I would". She says that she is not a career woman, "I don't want the big job, and the big role, but I would like a little bit more than what I am at". She goes on to discuss the lack of opportunity for her to progress her career before discussing the role of the learning technologist in general and whether or not it is being devalued. She explains how she was recently involved in an online forum where members were discussing the pay scale for her grade, how it has been systematically reducing and whether this was a reflection on how the role was perceived and valued within higher education institutions.

Choosing to do a doctorate

When pressed further about why she decided to do the doctorate Siobhan explained that she had originally thought about doing one when she was completing her second Masters because someone had mentioned that she could transfer it to a PhD. This idea had "tickled her fancy" and she liked the idea of being Dr Siobhan but after spending four years in total completing two Masters qualifications she "was just so glad to submit, that was it, it was done, finished and let's move on and get a job and do something different". She didn't really think about the doctorate again until a colleague registered to do an EdD when she then was challenged to consider it. While initially she decided that she would do a PhD, after reflection she realised that the EdD was probably a better option for her in that it gave her two years to think about her topic and it was a more achievable route for her with "bite sized pieces". She calls

herself Dr rather than putting EdD after her name and goes on to explain that she didn't think this was a snobbish thing only that the EdD was not so well known in Ireland as in the States and that "people don't understand the EdD". She goes on to talk about some of the perceived differences between the doctorate and the PhD and then admits that her colleague doing the doctorate and other colleagues with doctorates, definitely put pressure on her and gave her the impetus, especially in terms of career progression, to apply for the doctorate. She also says that the particular EdD she chose was "handy" because it was taught in Dublin.

Towards the end of the interview Siobhan starts to talk about the life grid and how she had spent "ages" doing it because she knew that she would forget things during the interview. She then goes off on a tangent to discuss something she had written on the life grid – that she was unhappy teaching. This led to another conversation about why she chose the academic route admitting that her unhappy experiences of the classroom led to her choosing education and subsequently the Masters in Education and then the EdD. Once again she cites her colleague doing the EdD as the stimulus for her to enrol and then she says:

> I think after doing the two masters in a row again I was so knackered and wiped out that I said I'm not doing anything again for a long time you know and it was a couple of years before I registered for something again but had she not registered then it could even have been longer but then I feel if I had gotten married I don't know if I would have taken it on. I think you have rose tinted glasses about marriage and having kids and it will be so easy and I think only when you start having the kids you realise how hard family life can be, not hard but busy and there just isn't time there is no personal time, had I not started it and committed I think I probably would never have started so it was the perfect time to start it actually. Once I commit to something, that's it, I'll do it. I couldn't have gotten on it and been accepted in a place I couldn't have walked away, it would kill me to walk away so I had to keep going. Something major would have had to happen to walk away from it.

Supporting the doctorate

Siobhan says that she was very supported throughout the doctoral process especially by her direct manager who was vocally encouraging. Her institution paid her fees, gave her study leave, let her leave work early and never asked for time to be recouped or for a commitment to remain with the institution after completion or money to be recouped. When she went over her agreed four year period of fees she did get a letter from a senior manager to ask about a possible submittal date and to remind her of the cost to the institution.

On a personal front Siobhan's parents were "chuffed" that their daughter was a doctoral candidate. Her family (parents and sisters) were very encouraging and supportive and she says that without her husband's support she couldn't have done it. Her husband supported her at home and also agreed to put money into crèche facilities so she could study at home freed up from childcare.

Impact of being a doctor

Siobhan doesn't think her role at work changed much after she became a doctor. She was asked to supervise some additional students. With all bar one of her colleagues having a doctorate she felt that she was now on a par academically and felt confidence in what she was doing. She thinks that not having the doctorate would have affected her more.

In a personal capacity she felt that having the doctorate had affected her and that she was proud of her achievement and glad that she had done it. Even signing her name as Dr Siobhan gives her the occasional "oh" moment. Siobhan shares several amusing

anecdotes about her family and their teasing of her doctoral status. She also talks about the day she received her doctorate and how she became emotional walking across the floor to collect it "you think Oh my God this is like five and a half years of work that has gone into this". Siobhan then starts to get emotional and takes out a tissue when remembering that day saying "and it still does, Oh Lord. I even got the tissue out, look, I knew this would happen" before expressing concern that she has never printed it out as evidence and should before her laptop crashes.

A narrative account of Davina

The interview with Davina took place in her office based in the library at a third level institution where she is employed. Before the interview we met for a cup of coffee and then started to complete the Life Grid together.

Background

Davina is a female in her early forties, married with two young children, and working full-time as a very senior academic librarian in a large higher institution in Ireland. She recently completed a Doctorate in Education from a British university and is working on some corrections after her viva.

Entering higher education

Davina described her experience of education as being 'in the main' positive. She refers briefly here to her early education and then to her university education before going on to describe her career working in a higher education environment. As she says "overall my experiences are going to be quite positive, I would consider myself to be, you know, somebody who really values it, enjoys it, and likes the environment". Davina knew from early on that she wanted to work in higher education. Although she wasn't sure at what junction or where or how, she just wanted to be in that sphere. When she went to university she knew quite quickly that she wanted to be a librarian. Every professional job she has had since has been in the area of higher education and she believes that it is by design and choice that she ended up in this area. As she says "I have always enjoyed that world and felt, you know, it's a good match for me, so I pursued it and I pursued careers in it. I actively am involved in it and actively staying in it and developing in it as I go along".

Working in higher education

Davina describes her current role as being at management level and she explains that this involves to some degree the areas of operation and strategy. As she says, "the operation is very much delivering the library service and making sure that all goes really well and being, you know, an innovative service and developing it and that. But at the strategy level then it's very much about being part of a bigger team, you know, sitting at the table with your colleagues, being part of the bigger picture and influencing the shape of what we are and what we do and how we do it". Davina then goes on to talk about the various committees she is involved with on the campus such as learning and teaching, research and development, etc. She sees her role as being very much about providing services that her stakeholders don't know they want until they get them and about being innovative and creative and proactive.

Collaboration and relationships

Davina works with a cross section of people including people from her own institution and from other national institutions. She works with people in her own field (librarianship), academics, people in teaching and learning, people from different disciplines, different fields, researchers and postgraduate. As she says:

> I suppose my experience in the main has always been very positive you know, libraries, we are lucky in a way we have a very kind of niche role that we play, that people have some sense of what we are about. They don't always know the detail or they mightn't always be, perception, you know, there could be more that we are doing that people don't know that we are doing but for the most part, I think we are kind of favourably seen as people who deliver a really important role in our institutions. Wherever I have worked I have always felt that, in truth, and I suppose that people want to hear what we have to say and that increasingly library people, I think for a long time people weren't great at speaking up and saying, you know, sort of singing our praises or establishing ourselves but I think as time goes by we're getting better at being more confident and being, you know, confident in a variety of different forums outside the library world.

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Davina goes on to say that she believes that it is important for the library to be active, engaged and visible because "we do have a really important role to play". She has had really positive encounters with all kinds of people from across the sector in higher education.

Later in the interview Davina comes back to this point to say that librarians are critical to the education sphere and that there is a growing momentum in that regard. She suggests that there is plenty of evidence of blogs and of "librarians being involved either in a partnering process with academics or on their own in terms of contributing and actively engaging in the field, which is really good".

Choosing to do a doctorate

Davina started out by saying that she chose to do a doctorate because she felt that she was helping so many people with their doctoral research but wasn't doing one herself. Also she says that in order to help these people get over the line that it would be better if she "felt their pain" and "kind of knew what it really felt like and I just felt, you know, that it would help in terms of professional development, in that regard. I suppose I made a real conscious decision then that if I was going to do this, you know, I wanted to do it for kind of professional development reasons". Davina then goes on to say that when she started the doctorate, she felt that it was becoming a real currency in higher education and "that if you were to continue sitting at tables with people and on committees and boards I often found myself one of the few people in the room without a doctoral qualification. I used to feel, you know, that the absence of it and I wanted to be at the table and to have it like everybody else in the room". She reiterates that it has become a currency to trade in and "it would be better to have it

than not have it I felt". When I pressed her a little more on this she explained further that she wanted to take information skills and information literacy out of the library and sit it into the bigger educational context because she felt that librarians are working in a very digital landscape with students using all of our resources but it is not just a library thing, it is part of the bigger educational context.

> What I wanted to do was talk to people outside of the library world and situate it into a bigger context theoretically and conceptually and do it properly in that regard and look at in in terms of a key part of disciplinary knowledge and how it needs to be further integrated into disciplinary knowledge.

She goes on to explain that she didn't want it to be a tangential add-on thing but to be acknowledged as something that is a key part of education and she wanted it to talk to people who were outside the library and information world.

Impact of doing a doctorate

Davina has been speaking at conferences and doing presentations long before she started the EdD. Even while her doctoral research was ongoing she continued to speak about other things. It was only when her doctoral research was nearing an end, and she had submitted and passed her full draft with her supervisor that she felt confident enough to present her research at conferences. Davina explains that she was very nervous and also 'it was this fragile thing that had taken me years to do and I didn't want anything to knock it off course at that point'. She also felt that for the integrity of the research and to keep it on track it would be better to wait until she knew it "had arrived or was over the line". She acknowledges that she will now have more to talk about and that she "might target conferences I wouldn't have targeted before. So I might target things about education rather than library stuff or the particular theorists that I used. There is an annual conference about him and I could see that you might be

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the only librarian there so I could see more that kind of thing happening so definitely that is a door to be opened".

As Davina obtained her doctorate so recently she is also not sure that she understands fully yet the impact it will make on her work environment, although she acknowledges that she will "probably end up being perceived differently". As she says:

> I hope I was right in my initial reasons when you'll have the currency and then it's yours and nobody can take it away and you did the hard work and you are at the table and you are as good as anyone in terms of a qualification so I think all of that stuff probably comes to bear. I don't feel hugely different, personally.

> I hope it does make, you get perceived and you feel different in time, perhaps

Davina talks further about the personal impact of achieving a doctorate. As she says, the journey to the doctorate has allowed her to learn more about herself and her capacity to "do this kind of work, to dig deep, like running a marathon, you know that you can do it and you can take on a big commitment and maybe personally it shows people that".

Feeling valued in a professional role

Davina begins to talk about both her current and previous roles in higher education. Her previous position was at a senior level and her current position is as a Director of Library Services. She says that in her previous role she "was at a senior level in an organisation and I felt very well-known, very well-valued. So many people wanted to, you know, to have my input and I felt very, I did in truth, felt very valued and valued in the library, outside of the library. And established, I felt very established and

valued". She then goes on to talk about her current role and once again "I do feel very valued in my new role. In my new role, I'm the Director. I do feel very valued". While she says that the difference is that she was well known in her previous role, the people in her new institution have "from the very get go" been very welcoming, supportive and delighted that she chose to come to the institution. In her career as a librarian she has felt that for the most part she has always been valued. She explains that she has gone after things and actively pursued things and tried to make a difference, to do things that people appreciate. She says that librarians have to go above and beyond and take chances. She admires the kind of creative thinking which allows librarians to take chances and try out new things. Overall she thinks that the fact that people have had faith in her and have been prepared to take chances on her, have made her feel valued.

Being a librarian

Davina says that for her being a librarian means the same as when she started out in the profession which is about uniting people with the key information that they need. She likes people and the written word or the e-word and this job gave her the opportunity to put the two together. Davina then goes on to talk about older female librarians she has worked with who entered the profession because they didn't want to teach, in a time when career options for women were limited. They wanted a quiet environment and they wanted to deal with books where now "this would be the wrong job if that's what you were after". She says she has barely touched a book for twenty years and instead she has gone down the management track where she "could be managing anything, like, you could be working in Tesco, you know? You are managing a commodity of some kind. You can't really call education a commodity

but you are managing like a concept and then you are managing people and you are trying to manoeuvre everything in a particular direction but really, you know, you could be working, you could be in Apple or Tesco or you know, in terms of you are just trying to deliver a job". For Davina being a librarian is about all those things and she lists "knowledge, education, learning, books, the word and it's all about people". She goes on to say that "it's the bigger picture, your national context, it's really big and the people are really important, networks and all of that".

Supporting the doctorate

Davina tells me that it took her nine years to do the doctorate and although she is a huge believer in if you really want something you will find a way there is probably never a right time to do something. So that "positive type attitude" probably helped her. She also says that she thinks she has great support in terms of people wanting and encouraging her to do it. Librarians don't get summers off or paid study leave so "you are doing a lot of it on your own time". Her work environment at the time was one which supported staff training and development and encouraged people to go on courses even in a recession. The motivation was there and she says "I would say I absolutely got everything I could have got and was as supported as I could have been and I felt really lucky about that and really fortunate and really grateful for that in the institution". She mentions that she had some critical friends in the institution and that they read her work and helped her get it over the line. Others from outside the library could see why she was doing it and were interested in the work she was doing because as she says "it affects all of us, like it not just affects us in the library but it affects our academic colleagues in terms of, you know, the time pressures they are under and, you know, VLEs and all the issues that go with that".

In terms of her personal circumstances she says "it's tough, like it was really, that is the real challenge. When you are working full-time and you have young children you are literally stealing time wherever you go, early mornings, late nights, giving up things, not going on holidays or turning down invitations. You just hope, well everybody would have known I was doing it, you know? And I think people understand in general, but it is, I would say, hard for people who haven't done it to understand what it's actually like, the pain of it". While she explains that she always felt supported she confesses that she was sure people thought "would it ever end?" and she had begun thinking that herself. She says that she made huge sacrifices to get it over the line and even her small children now know what a thesis is because "it was taking me away from them". As she puts it "thesis equals absence". As she goes on to say:

> And that's difficult too you know and I know for all our children in time they will go, 'wow mum is a doctor', but like, so you just hope that bit outweighs the thesis versus absence bit when they are this young because it is hard and as a woman you do feel it like. You do feel, you just feel well, the principle of why we are doing it is really good and all of that, the practice of it because it is difficult, it is very difficult, you know, it really is all, there isn't even anything I could think about in terms of time management. It's just there isn't enough hours in the day. You are just doing the very best you can with the little bit of time you have to spread yourself as widely and as thinly as you can just in terms of keeping the whole show going, like it is difficult, you know. Yeah, even when you are supported it is difficult like, you know.

Why would a librarian choose to do a doctorate?

When I asked Davina at the end of the interview if there was anything she would like to add on any of the areas that we had discussed, she said that what she felt was very interesting was the concept of why a librarian would do a doctorate in education. As she says:

Perhaps there was a sense of why would a librarian want to do this and yet on a practical level people want to know a librarian because the librarian is the person who will help them, knows how to find all the information. So as soon as it gets into doing research people start going where's the librarian? How do I get into journals and books? So, on a practical level they see the relationship we have with research. But on a kind of theoretical level I think the research may be, because it's not traditionally done by the librarians, people are still working out the role that a librarian might play in that sort of theoretical space. So I think that's a really interesting, emerging kind of literature.

She goes further to state that in the US there are a lot of librarians who have doctoral qualifications and that in Ireland this phenomenon is increasing because "it's an obvious thing for a librarian to do" and librarians "have a really emerging role to play in the practice but also in the theory of being part of all that". Davina also believes that it isn't enough to do doctoral work and then park it (even though librarians may want to do that) but instead librarians as a profession should be part of the whole picture and should be speaking at conferences and talking and writing about their experiences and then they have "the real potential to have those conversations in a network and influence".

If we don't do doctoral work and if we are not involved at that level we will always be tangential at the practice level as opposed to conceptually involved and involved in the design of the theory and influencing how that might look and feel in the wider sphere of education. So I can see real reasons why, and value to, librarians becoming more and more involved at doctoral level in research and contributing then.

A narrative account of Sonya

The interview with Sonya took place in the boardroom at her offices in a city centre location. Her organisation is an independent body and agency of the Government of Ireland. Sonya did not complete a life grid prior to the interview and seemed reluctant to do so. When I asked her again at the end of the interview, she said she would prefer to complete it and send it on by email. I did not receive a completed life grid from her. The interview lasted an hour and 15 minutes.

Background

Sonya is a woman in her middle forties to early fifties who is married with one step-child. She is a Senior Executive in the organisation where she works with responsibility for Professional Development. She recently gained her Doctorate in Education with a British university.

Going to primary and secondary school

Sonya begins by taking about her early experiences of education. She tells the story of how, as a child, she became used to being first in the class at her small school. When she reached fifth class, her mother was advised by the headmaster that Sonya could skip sixth class and go straight to secondary school. When she did this she found that she was the youngest in her year and this meant that she left secondary school at seventeen, an age that she now considers "a little bit immature to be leaving school". Once again her experiences of being in secondary school were that of a child who was always second in the class and she talks about "a little bit of competition between myself and the chap who was always first in the class". The school was small and she worked hard but she was thwarted in her attempts to do science by a rule at the school

that required girls to do home economics while boys were allowed to do biology, chemistry and physics. This she felt was "outrageous" and while she liked Home Economics she didn't want to be forced to do it for her Leaving Cert examination so she asked her parents if she could leave and go to another school. They agreed and so she left to go to a larger school, one with a good reputation and although she says that initially her decision wasn't socially motivated, she found that on moving she "academically let things slide". At the new school there were a wider array of people and she started to become more of a social animal. She gained "an okay Leaving Cert" and says that she "lost the academic groove".

> Did I work hard for my leaving Cert exams? No I didn't and I still did an okay Leaving Cert but it was, I mean I just lost the academic groove and I suppose my parents didn't really notice.

> Anyway, yeah, so the Leaving Cert was okay. I didn't really have a focus with regard to what I wanted to do.

She thought at one stage that she wanted to be a dietician because she thought that was exciting and then she lost "that yen".

Entering higher education

After the Leaving Cert, Sonya applied for an international marketing course at several colleges. She chose this course because she had always loved French and thought she could do something with languages. She accepted her second choice at a third level institution and on her first day in class saw "a really weird boy from school" who was in her classroom and "I thought I can't look at that boy for the next 10 years" so she left. A late offer came in from the university which had been her first initial choice and she accepted the offer.

> I thought this was way more fun, and this university has a much better reputation, it is a university, and again I wasn't really thinking of it

academically because I didn't really want to be, it was social science and I didn't want to be a social worker and that's kind of what people did when they finished social sciences. But anyway so I started and then my academic enthusiasm, drive just dissipated altogether, so I became much more focussed on enjoying college life. When I did apply myself to my books or was kind of you know doing, I did social science for a year, hated it, really liked the sociology part of it which does the loop later on as you will see, didn't really enjoy social science at all. I was in a class of 120 girls. There were about 3 boys in the hall but they were there because they wanted to help people and I just didn't identify with them and I also didn't enjoy the course so I think I failed most of my first year exams.

Sonya switched course to do Arts studying the subjects of English, French and Philosophy and while she again enjoyed the reading did not like the application so she dropped out at the end of the year and decided to go and live in Copenhagen with a friend.

So, moved to Copenhagen. This was really exciting. So I was 20 and had never lived away from home but again you know, I think I was a little wayward, it is probably coming across as quite wayward, I think I was just a little bit wayward. I was just interested in living as I thought life needed to be lived. And I suppose it is essentially what I did, I kind of followed my heart then you know for the next, that was 20 probably until the age of 33, 34.

Sonya "followed her heart" for the next 13-14 years, initially returning to Dublin when she was twenty one, working as a waitress for a time, "all a little bohemian" then decided at twenty four that she needed to get a "real job".

Working life

Sonya decided to do a secretarial course and French because she had decided that she wanted to go to a French speaking country and admits that in particular it was Paris that she was interested in. She was offered an administrative job in Geneva at the United Nations (UN) but she had a lot of internal tension because as she says "Oh my God Sonya, you know you can do an awful lot more than this, you're bored silly with

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your kind of 9-5 job. But how are you going to move yourself out of that?" While Geneva was exciting and it was interesting to see how the UN worked it wasn't enough for a young girl in her twenties who wanted the "bright lights, big city, I wanted to go to Paris." After eighteen months:

> I gave up my really good job with the UN and I packed my suitcase and my basket and I got on the train and I went to Paris. And I did get a job I think probably within a week sort of a bilingual paralegal secretary type role within the legal department of a big French multinational.

Sonya stayed with the company in Paris for 4 years and while she was there she began and dropped out of several courses including a distance learning course in communications with a college in England (focussed too much on advertising), a law degree in one of the Paris universities (as she was about to start it she became really unhappy and moved home to Ireland) and a Press Attaché course at a private college in Paris (her mastery of French wasn't sufficient to write) – "I kind of should have finished French in my Bachelor Degree shouldn't I?" After a failed love affair she moved back to Ireland but the country was recovering from recession and there were few jobs. Taking work as a secretary she became frustrated at her situation and her inability to complete a qualification. She wanted security in a job and this seemed to lead her back again to Europe where she was successful in gaining a role in a large organisation in Brussels as an assistant to a very senior director. After four years she moved home.

> I came home in 1997. My mum had died in early 1997 and my dad was on his own. I'm an only child so I came home. Actually I came home because I got a job. So I got a job and I came home but I was looking to move home anyway. So that was my first exposure to higher education as an institution.

Working in higher education

The institute where Sonya came to work in Dublin offered her support to do a part-time Bachelor Degree so having completed the course she decided to go on and do a Masters in another Dublin university, and funded again by her employer. Time out of work to attend the course (2-3days a week) was also facilitated not only by her employer but by 'a really decent boss' who allowed her to attend work on a part-time basis. Sonya says the Master's in Economic Science brought together all her "experiences and life experiences".

Choosing to do a doctorate

After working in the organisation for eight years, Sonya applied for a doctorate in higher education which was once again approved by her boss and employer but just before she took up the course, she moved role and department. Sonya talks about her motivations for doing the doctorate.

> I needed to prove to myself that I could do it. I don't know if I would have had that quest and thirst for learning if I had just completed my actual degree back in, would have been 1984, because I was, I was on the back foot really, I really was on the back foot for quite some time relative to my peers so I probably needed to prove to myself that I could do it but when I finished the Masters I just thought I can't stop here, it didn't satisfy my need for learning, the Masters, maybe because it was because of the type of Masters, that it was, it was multidisciplinary and it kind of just skirted around the theory more than actually going down into it. I think that is what I wanted, I actually needed to excavate a little bit what was going on with the theory, and just to see if I, I needed to challenge myself as well so I didn't adequately challenge me, I just needed to see if I could do it and where it would take me but I really did need to explore that knowledge area to a greater extent, where I could feel satisfied.

Later in the interview she comes back to this issue of dropping out of college and how it had a major impact on her life. She was always regretful about not finishing her original degree and felt that she wasn't on an equal footing to other people. As she

talks she has an epiphany, where she comes to the realisation that although it took a long time for her to 'own' the experience, she is now comfortable about the journey she took in life and the varied experiences that she has had.

Supporting the doctorate

Throughout the interview Sonya referred to the institutional support she received for her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and also her doctoral studies. When asked directly about support for her doctorate, she mentions two particular people who were very supportive in terms of enabling the financial support and software support she received. In addition this director and his manager were trying to recast a different role for her within her working environment which was less about her graduate level and more about her competence level. Their support was also instrumental in facilitating her application to do a doctorate. She left the organisation before she was able to take advantage of any time off. However, she also states that it was up to her to put in place systems that would ensure that she could do the doctorate while also delivering what she was paid to deliver at work.

Impact of doing a doctorate

When Sonya moved organisation she shifted the area of her research away from a specifically higher education focus to work instead on a project that she was developing and implementing in her new position. This directly impacted on her role in her new organisation especially in terms of the policy she was developing "certainly one informed the other".

In terms of personal impact she says that "it is really weird, I actually find it hard to use it". She explains that because she is no longer working in academia, people were confused when she called herself Doctor. She used the title for a year after gaining the qualification but then stopped. As she says, "my husband is a bit odd about it so because I am not working in academia and I don't know, he is kind of like, why are you using your title?" She has had funny responses and there have been funny effects as a result of her having the doctorate. Within her organisation she says that there are a number of people with PhDs and the organisation want the staff to display their titles on the website so she does use her title there.

Sonya then goes on to tell a story about something that happened at her Viva which "bothered" her. Her external examiner said it was a great shame that her doctorate was not a PhD. This really upset her and at the time she replied "are they not all meant to be the same and on an equal footing?" Sonya explains that her career move from working in a higher education institution to working in a government agency had made her question why she was doing an education doctorate rather than a PhD. The lectures at the series of weekend lectures no longer seemed relevant and some of the lectures were based around themes which seemed like different worlds to her. She says she has a "complete crisis" which prompted her to speak to the Head of School where she was doing her doctorate, to tell them that she was thinking about leaving. She was persuaded that she was in the right place and that there was a place for her studies. So then to be faced with the idea that she should have done a PhD was a "pity". She decided that she would have to get over it and move beyond it.

A narrative account of Patrick

The interview with Patrick took place in his office based in a small third level institution where he is employed as a Head of Department. The life grid was completed at the end of the interview. The interview lasted forty five minutes.

Background

Patrick is a man and could be aged anywhere between his early thirties to late forties. Throughout the interview Patrick presented his narrative from the perspective of his life as a professional person revealing very little about his personal life.

Experiences of education

Patrick starts straight in to tell me that his experiences of education have been "fairly straightforward and very positive". Without giving any additional detail he relates his path from primary to secondary school then straight into third level where he did a primary degree, then another primary degree followed by a higher diploma for teaching at secondary level and then a Masters. He then did a conversion degree for teaching at primary school level followed by another Masters. This meant that for a period of ten years he was studying non-stop. During this time "intertwined with work" there was "quite a lot of education". He then moved into third level in a teaching role. He explains that he has taught at primary, secondary and third level "a little of all but master of none" and "the experience has been very good". Quoting from Nelson Mandela he says that education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world and explains that this has been his own philosophy or ethos all his life in terms of education. At a personal level he believes that as he went through the various programmes and courses over the years the big difference was the

realisation at third level that he could think for himself. At secondary school he had soaked up information and "I was very good at the kind of sponge model where I soaked things in and squirted back. I never really had to think outside the box and I actually went through my first degree and my arts degree in college with the very same mentality". Patrick believes that as he matured he began to benefit from higher education.

Working in higher education

After qualifying as a secondary school teacher Patrick moved briefly into primary school teaching completing his Masters in primary education before immediately gaining a role as a lecturer in a College of Education in a small Irish city. He left that college to take on a role as lecturer and registrar in another third level college before moving to his current position as Head of Lifelong Learning.

Patrick describes his role as "all encompassing" because it is strongly administrative at one level and also very hands on, with a lot of operation. It is also very strategic with his unit forming partnerships with different industries and running specific courses for them. So his job is "very, very varied" and he is on the road a lot between campuses meeting different collaborators and partners in industry. He also describes the role as very interesting and goes into detail about the content of some of the courses offered at the different campuses. What comes across is his enthusiasm for community and work based education programmes where people from all walks of life have access to higher education.

Later in the interview, Patrick talks about what a privilege it is for him to be involved in education and how he regards his role as a privileged one with huge responsibility to ensure that every year the quality and support has improved so that every student can expect an even better service the following year. He talks about how he loves the month of November which is graduation season "and again the human story comes through very strongly at that point in time".

> It really is a privilege when you meet the families. Particularly I am always taken by the first generation learners and we still have quite a high number of first generation learners that are moving through lifelong learning and you know, the story of the person who left school early, who didn't succeed through formal education and who is coming back as second chance, they are great stories, that is why I would say it is a privilege.

While Patrick thinks luck has played a large part in the shaping of his career "being in the right place at the right time" he also believes that his own ethos "to work hard and give it your best" has also shaped his career progression from the positions he has held to the way he has moved within them.

Although Patrick does not reveal personal or family information during the interview, an interesting fact from his personal narrative emerged during the completion of the life grid at the end of the interview. I noticed that there was a gap between leaving school and attending college and when I asked him about this gap, he explained that he had been a priest for a short time until deciding to leave the priesthood. He seemed reluctant to discuss this further.

Collaboration and relationships

On a day to day basis Patrick is involved with all the support services including the library, finance, academic administration, etcetera within his organisation but his own

duties are confined mainly to administration and he no longer has, as he puts it, an academic role. He says he thinks the relationships with all these people are very good and goes on to explain that one of the advantages of his working environment is the close proximity to others in the building so rather than simply "liaising with people by email" he goes to their office in addition to the mail, and knocks on their door because he believes that it is easier to have a follow through face to face and this has helped him build relationships. Although Patrick explains that most of his daily conversations are concerned with academic issues, his relationships with academic staff have been in the main confined to meetings where issues such as plagiarism, timetabling and personnel issues related to the lecture hall environment are discussed. He has not been involved with any research with academics. He describes his role as one that moves across both academic and non-academic spheres but he identifies more with a non-academic administrative function. He explains that in other institutions his role might be more one than the other because the model changes across different learning centres. He asks out loud "what is academic?" and goes on to say that he thinks that the role is more than just lecturing and research but it does span across all the other services and differs across institutions.

Choosing to do a doctorate

Patrick explains that for reasons of credibility he decided to do the doctorate in education. He had put the decision on the long finger for a number of years and with the potential for major change in his organisation, decided that "well I better do it now". With several higher educational institutions in Ireland applying to become technological universities there was an increasing emphasis on staff having doctoral qualifications. Patrick felt that in his role it would be difficult to persuade other staff

members in the organisation to upgrade their qualifications to PhD level if he was not prepared to lead the way himself and set a good example. He had been interested in studying a particular subject area within higher education years before and felt that it might be a subject he could revisit for a doctorate in education. The subject was related to his work area and he felt that the structured model of an EdD with twice yearly weekend schools would be his preference. He knew several people who were already doing their doctorate in the UK at a particular university and he thought that he would apply there. However, when he went "gungho" to the president with his proposal it was turned down. Instead he was advised to apply for a PhD because the President wanted the staff to acquire a mix of Education Doctorates and PhDs. Patrick instead chose a structured PhD programme in Higher Education at a British University and this was subsequently approved. At the time of interview he had completed his first year and was enjoying the practical nature of the programme, "to me it didn't really matter where I studied if at least I felt I could do it".

Supporting the doctorate

Patrick told me that with regard to being supported in his undertaking of the doctorate he would say "yes and no". He explains that in his work role he is very busy and is frequently out of the office a lot travelling to various other locations. His expectation when starting out on the course was that he would have to make the space and time for himself and that he wouldn't be released from his work to do his own studies and this has proven correct. So while he has withdrawn from some of the later nights working he has had to be more disciplined and that has meant working to deadlines in his own time and at weekends. As he laughs "so I am particularly good at the last minute. It's amazing the way all these great thoughts come in and you say why the

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hell didn't I do this three weeks ago? But I think the adrenalin only kicks in at the last minute and I think oddly enough that you know I am always working on it in my mind. So it is actually going on there so there is energy being expended on that but it only comes to fruition at the very end when it needs to". He says that he hopes this model will sustain him though the next few years. He is not completely sure that he has been supported but explains it thus:

> Yes, I mean, I think so, again there would have been a few occasions when I would have said no. But that is where I am under pressure and when I step back from it I am under pressure because I have left things too late myself. And I blame everyone else at that moment in time. So I think the more reasoned reflection on it would be that yes, I have been supported.

Impact of doing a doctorate

Although it is too early in the doctorate to really know whether it has had an impact especially in a professional capacity, and he has not increased any research or supervision activities, Patrick does think that in terms of credibility, having a doctorate will have an impact on dealing with external stakeholders and people within industry partnerships. The doctorate he believes will bring credibility to the conversation especially with partnerships where people look to titles. He then goes on to explain that he actually has some difficulty with this area because he says that sometimes qualifications are overrated and that particular skill sets are more useful to particular roles. He gives an example from his own experience where on paper some people have appeared extremely qualified with a PhD in a very niche area but they have had huge difficulty translating that into practice in a lecture hall where they have been completely out of their comfort zone. However he believes that in 'certain scenarios' and in areas of management or areas where "management span so called

academia with administration" doctoral qualifications can only help because people will look for and expect the PhD.

In term of furthering his career Patrick initially says that he doesn't think that having a PhD will make any difference to his role within the current structure of the institution where he works but then he goes on to say that if the structure were to change, for example if the institution were to be granted technological university status, then potentially it could make a difference. After a brief reflection, he then contradicts this statement further by saying that a merged structure could however mean less growth and opportunity with roles being merged and more competition for fewer positions. He thinks that overall having a PhD, depending on the context, could be an advantage.

In a personal capacity Patrick thinks the gaining of a PhD will give him confidence. He talks about his previous educational attainments and how with every level he gained more confidence and a greater sense of achievement. He explains that writing in an academic style and reading and engaging with the academic literature for the first year of the PhD has been confidence boosting and has broadened his knowledge. He has found that this has helped establish links through conversation with others and in his opinion this is always a good thing.

Appendix B

Cover Letter to Participants

1st December 2014

Dear sir/madam,

I am a student on the Education Doctorate (EdD) programme at the University of Sheffield and I am currently carrying out research under the supervision of Dr Vassiliki Papatsiba in the School of Education. My research is a narrative study exploring the experiences and motivations of professional staff based in Irish third level institutions in Ireland who are pursuing, or have recently completed, an EdD either in Ireland or in the UK.

You are invited to take part in this research project. It is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the information in the attached Participant Information Sheet carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information please contact me at (00 353) 01 4023681 or email me either at edq08dm@sheffield.ac.uk or Diana.mitchell@dit.ie.

If you wish to participate, please email me at one of the addresses above. It will also be necessary for you to sign and return the attached Participant Consent Form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Your participation in the research will be very much appreciated.

Yours Faithfully

_____

Diana Mitchell

Appendix C

Participant Information Letter

Participant Information Sheet

Working Title of Study

What are the experiences of professional staff working in Irish third level institutions while studying for their professional doctorate in education?

Invitation to take part

You are being invited to participate in a research project. Before deciding whether or not you would like to participate, please take the time to read the following information about the research aims and how you will be expected to contribute. Please feel free to contact me if there is anything which is unclear or if you have any questions.

What is the purpose of the project?

This project is being carried out in fulfilment of the requirements for an Ed. D. at the University of Sheffield.

The project aims to explore the experiences of professional staff employed in third level institutions in Ireland while undertaking a doctorate in education. In particular, the study will seek to gain an understanding of how these professional staff, who are not employed on academic contracts, experience their everyday working environment especially in terms of their perceived identity and relationships with other staff members based in their institutions.

These experiences will be explored using a narrative approach which will aim to collect stories from individual participants through semi-structured interviews. The participant will also complete a life grid before attending for interview. The life grid will be used as a visual temporal framework to capture both quantitative and qualitative information pertaining to the participant's educational qualifications, career history, and significant other events both work based and external.

Who will be involved in the project?

A total of 8 professional staff will be recruited from various third level institutions in Ireland. These staff will not be employed on academic contracts but will have recently completed or will be close to completing a doctorate in education (Ed.D) either in Ireland or in the UK.

What will be involved if you agree to take part?

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to participate in one, and possibly 2 semi-structured interviews between June and October 2014. You will also be asked to complete a life grid in collaboration with the researcher at the beginning of your interview. The life grid is a simple table which details particular events in timelines, for example, when you changed jobs, received a promotion or completed a qualification. The interview may take somewhere between 1- 2 hours and it may be necessary to have a shorter follow up interview. Also, there may be some post-interview contact to perhaps clarify an issue raised during the interview.

The interviews will take place at a time and place suitable for you. They will be recorded and transcribed. You will be sent a copy of the transcripts to ensure that they provide a true and acceptable record of the discussion at interview.

During the interview you will be asked to talk about the reasons behind your decision to undertake a doctorate, the level of support you have received from your institution to undertake this qualification and about some of your everyday working experiences especially as it relates to relationships and identities within the academic environment.

Do you have to take part?

You have been invited to take part because I believe that your experiences could make a valuable contribution to this research project.

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to take part there will be no penalty of any sort. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form which is attached with this information sheet. If for any reason, you decide to participate and then would like to withdraw from the research at any time, you may of course do so immediately without any penalty.

Will your taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Every effort will be made to ensure that your identity and privacy are protected. All the information collected from you either in the interview or through the life grid, will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be referred to by name in any of the documents relating to the project. You will be anonymised both in the interview transcriptions, the narratives in the final thesis and any subsequent related publications. All data will be held securely by the researcher and will not be accessible to any other person.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The data collected from you and other participants will be analysed and the results will be communicated in the form of a doctoral dissertation which will be submitted to the University of Sheffield. There is also the possibility that the results may be presented through a relevant academic

conference and published in a peer reviewed academic or professional journal. Any information which has been deemed confidential will not be published and all participants will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

Who has reviewed the project?

This research has been ethically reviewed by the University of Sheffield Ethics Review Committee in the School of Education and has been deemed ethically acceptable by them.

What if something goes wrong?

Please contact me in the first instance to discuss any concerns you may have. If you feel that your concern has not been addressed appropriately, my supervisor will be at your disposal to discuss the matter. Her contact details are:

Dr Vassiliki Papatsiba at v.papatsiba@sheffield.co.uk.

If you feel that the issue has not been handled to your satisfaction you may contact the University of Sheffield's Registrar and Secretary on 0044 114 222 1100 and registrar@sheffield.ac.uk .

Contact details for further information

Should you require further information on this research study, please feel free to contact me, Diana Mitchell, at DIT Bolton Street Library, Bolton Street, Dublin or 086 8204599, or by email at either edq08dm@sheffield.ac.uk or Diana.mitchell@dit.ie .

Thank you for expressing an interest in this research project. If you decide to take part, you will find a consent form enclosed which you should complete and return to me. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form and this information sheet to keep.

Many thanks,

Diana Mitchell

Appendix D

Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Research Project: What are the experiences of professional staff working in Irish third level institutions while studying for their professional doctorate in education?

Name of Researcher: Diana Mitchell

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the letter dated June 10 2014 for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymous in the analysis.

4. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Researcher	Date	Signature

To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information

Appendix E

Life Grid

LIFE GRID TEMPLATE

PARTICIPANT NUMBER:	
RESEARCHER:	DIANA MITCHELL
INSTITUTION	UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

DATE	AGE	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	CAREER HISTORY	SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL EVENTS	SIGNIFICANT WORK EVENTS
1965					
1966					
1967					
1968					
1969					
1970					
1971					
1972					
1973					
1974					
1975					
1976					
1977					

LIFE GRID TEMPLATE

PARTICIPANT NUMBER:	
RESEARCHER:	DIANA MITCHELL
INSTITUTION	UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

DATE	AGE	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	CAREER HISTORY	SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL EVENTS	SIGNIFICANT WORK EVENTS
1978					
1979					
1980					
1981					
1982					
1983					
1984					
1985					
1986					
1987					
1988					
1989					
1990					

LIFE GRID TEMPLATE

PARTICIPANT NUMBER:	
RESEARCHER:	DIANA MITCHELL
INSTITUTION	UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

DATE	AGE	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	CAREER HISTORY	SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL EVENTS	SIGNIFICANT WORK EVENTS
1991					
1992					
1993					
1994					
1995					
1996					
1997					
1998					
1999					
2000					
2001					
2002					
2003					

LIFE GRID TEMPLATE

PARTICIPANT NUMBER:	
RESEARCHER:	DIANA MITCHELL
INSTITUTION	UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

DATE	AGE	EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	CAREER HISTORY	SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL EVENTS	SIGNIFICANT WORK EVENTS
2004					
2005					
2006					
2007					
2008					
2009					
2010					
2011					
2012					
2013					
2014					
2015					