

Being There – A Qualitative Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry into the lived experiences of women in management and leadership in Higher Education in Ireland.

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Submitted to Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Structured Phd in Education

December 2021

Abstract

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The story of a male dominated leadership environment in academia is one which has been well told both nationally and internationally, as has the description of the academy as one in which the devaluing of women has become socially normalised. There is also the underlying problem of the gendered organisation, whereby work practices and embedded attitudes to male and female stereotyped roles have evolved from the life experience of the traditional male wage earner such that the image of leadership is still “resolutely masculine” (Fitzgerald, 2016, p. 209). The under-representation and marginalisation of women has been further exacerbated by the rise in the culture of new managerialism in the HE sector. This study adds to the growing literature on the career experiences of women in academia internationally and looks beneath the surface of this grand narrative of underrepresentation of women in Higher Educational management and leadership, exploring the ‘understory’ of what is it is like for women simply ‘being there’.

The researcher has undertaken a literary arts-based narrative inquiry which set out to co-construct stories of lived experience with women who have held or continue to hold leadership positions in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Ireland. Their stories helped the researcher make sense of her own experiences as a Head of Department in HE, and as co-participants we have shared our stories as women simply ‘being there’ in the role. The research design of this narrative inquiry is underpinned by the adoption of a constructivist, interpretivist stance and the participant narratives are viewed through a post-structural critical feminist lens to examine the gendered experiences of women operating in a predominantly male environment. Poststructuralism seeks to unpack and break down accepted knowledges to shed new light and produce new insight, the kind of insight that

stories of personal and lived experience can bring to the wider discourse on gender inequality.

The story threads in the participant narratives have been unravelled and woven together again into a patchwork quilt of lived experience and 're'-told as poetic monologues, creative non-fiction stories, culminating in one coherent telling in the form of an ethnographic playscript or ethnodrama. Ethnodrama can be viewed as a means of giving the participant narratives an "aesthetic shape and magnitude" (Saldana, 2010, p. 68) which adds to their value and could lead to a more meaningful and wider engagement with the research material. Immersed in a research paradigm which eschews singularity, this literary arts-based narrative inquiry offers an interpretation of the stories of lived experiences that I have been privileged to hear, but it is only one interpretation and as Clandinin (2018) concludes, it could always have been otherwise.

As such, emerging out of 'small stories' of personal and lived experience, I offer a story of women who aspire(d) to achieve in roles that were not written for them; who resist where possible the demands of hegemonical male power structures that are endemic in management and leadership in HE in Ireland in an effort to retain their status as both women and managers and more often than not, carers; and who are expected to perform their gender and act as the 'one caring' to carry out the organisational 'housework' and interpersonal management tasks through the gendered expectation of an ethic of care and connectedness; and the achievement of all of the above at a sometimes heavy personal cost.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or part, by me or another for the purposes of obtaining any other qualification.

Signed: *Ashling Mythen*

Date: *16 / 04 / 22.*

Acknowledgements

I am forever indebted to my participants who entrusted me with their stories and gave of their time to sit with me and co-create a new story together.

To my partner Gerry who supported me throughout it all.

To my dearest daughter Hannah who grew up into a wonderful young woman while I had my 'head in the books' over so many of our weekends together during these last few years. It will not be forgotten.

Finally, to my mother and father, whose drive to educate their children against the odds was an inspiration and a gift for which I will be forever grateful. *Ar dheis De a n-anamacha.*

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List of Abbreviations

HE Higher Education

HEA Higher Educational Authority

HEI Higher Education Institute

HOD Head of Department in IoT sector

HOS Head of School in IoT sector

IoT Institute of Technology

MIC Mary Immaculate College

NUIG National University of Ireland, Galway

STEM Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

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¹ Soft copy wav. format, hard copy in CD format, either on request.

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Prologue

This female connection to storytelling resonates deeply with me and my decision to draw on narrative inquiry as both methodology and method in this research endeavour. Both the act of spinning and the metaphorical ‘spinning’ or telling of stories feature strongly in the handed down oral literature of the myth and the fairy tale, these “prime vehicle(s) of reason” (Warner, 2014, p.147), these “lucid mirror(s) of mores and manners” such that women and the world of women are singularly captured in such tales across the generations.

Warner (2014) and Carter (1990) both speak of the importance of storytelling for and to women. Storytelling traditionally allowed women to ‘thrive’ in their own domain and allowed for a *continuity* of women’s voices through archetypal female storytellers who handed down wisdom from one generation to the next, fostering a tradition of talking and thinking back through our mothers, which twentieth century feminism sought to re-ignite (Woolf, 1967). Images of women weaving and spinning have been favoured by feminists primarily due to their connection with traditional female roles in society but also for their optimistic images of connecting and creating pattern (Stone, 1986). Stories exist within a “circle of listeners” (Capek 1990 cited in Warner, 2014), moving back and forth between the generations, “fluid as a conversation taking place over centuries” (Warner, 2014, p. 44) and can provide a means of looking backwards to go forwards (SuAndi, 2006, p. 118).

The fairy tale image of women collectively weaving and spinning together was embedded deep under the surface of this narrative inquiry process for me – veiled and perhaps somewhat esoteric but a lovely metaphor for the collaborative story-sharing and story-making that is narrative inquiry. I would like to start the journey with a poem by the late Eavan Boland – *Patchwork* (Boland, 2001) - which metaphorically I will use to illustrate the processes by which I have followed certain threads in the literature and spun or woven them together with the story threads in the co-constructed narratives of my participants - my ‘trashbag’ of colours as it were – to create something new. Like Boland, I too have worked late into the night over the lifetime of this research to cut and stitch and patch these story threads together to weave a new story, a patchwork quilt of the lived experiences of a group of women in management and leadership in Higher Education (HE) in Ireland.

Original Poem by Eavan Boland – ‘Patchwork’

I have been thinking at random
on the universe
or rather, how nothing in the universe
is random –
(there’s nothing like presumption late into the night)

*My sumptuous
trash bag of colours -
Laura Ashley cottons -
waits to be cut
and stitched and patched...*

*but there’s a mechanical feel
about the handle
of my secondhand sewing machine,
with its flowers
and Singer painted orange on it.
And its iron wheel.*

*My back is to the dark.
Somewhere out there
are stars and bits of stars
and little bits of bits.
And swiftness and brightness and drift.*

But is it craft or art?

I will be here

*till midnight,
cross-legged in the dining-room,
logging triangles and diamonds,
cutting and aligning,
finding greens in pinks
and burgundies in whites,
until I finish it.*

There's no reason in it.

*Only when it's laid
right across the floor,
sphere on square
and seam on seam,
in a good light -
a night-sky spread -
will it start to hit me.*

These are not bits.

They are pieces.

And the pieces fit.

(From "Outside History: Selected Poems, 1980-1990. W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).

Chapter 1 Introduction and Thesis Overview - Setting the Scene

“I hesitated a long time about writing a book on woman. The subject is irritating especially for women: it is not new. Enough ink has flowed over the quarrel about feminism; it is now almost over: let’s not talk about it anymore. Yet it is still being talked about”.

(de Beauvoir, 2009, p. 3)

1.1 Introduction

This doctoral research is a qualitative narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000) which draws on a range of literary and arts-based elements (Kim, 2016; Barone and Eisner, 2012) to explore the lived experiences of a group of women who are or who have been in management and leadership roles in the Higher Educational sector in Ireland over the last decade, of which I am one myself. I have worked as part of the management team in a Higher Educational Institution (HEI)² in Ireland for over a decade. This dissertation represents an account of my research experience of story-sharing and story-making with the participants and is framed as a narrative inquiry, using narrative interviewing as my primary research method.

Chase (2018, p. 547) defines narrative inquiry as “meaning-making” or a way of understanding one’s own actions and those of others using narratives of lived experience. Thus at the heart of this research story are the stories or narratives we have co-constructed together (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000), as we explored what it means to be a woman in

² HEI’s are currently made up of three entities: 1. Universities (University of Dublin, Trinity College; National University of Ireland (Galway, Cork, Dublin, Maynooth); University of Limerick; Dublin City University, and the newer Technological Universities – TU Dublin, January 2020 (Tallaght Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, Dublin Institute of Technology); Munster Technological University, January 2021 (Institute of Technology, Tralee, Cork Institute of Technology); Technological University of the Shannon, October 2021 (Limerick Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology). 2. Institutes of Technology make up the second HEI category, including two which will merge to form the Atlantic Technological University to be designated in 1st April 2022 (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Letterkenny institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology) leaving Waterford Institute of Technology, Carlow Institute of Technology and Dundalk Institute of Technology . 3. Finally, Colleges make up the Irish third-level landscape.

HE management and leadership. Co-construction in narrative inquiry describes the process of collaborative meaning-making that takes place between the researcher and the researched, and the participant narratives are the coherent stories that emerged from the collaborative interaction that took place between myself and the participants, as part of this inquiry.

Building on the body of research on the career experiences of women in academic leadership in Ireland (O' Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; Lynch et al., 2020; Harford, 2020; Harford, 2018; O' Connor, 2014; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011; Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009) I wanted to go beyond the stories that are usually told, the "taken-for-grantedness" (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p.78) and explore with the participants the *understory* of the daily lived experiences of women in academic management and leadership by living, telling and 'retelling' stories of those experiences together. Etorre (2016) uses her narrative writing to expose new meanings in feminist research, to move beyond restating already held views and understandings. She wants to empower her readers, use her stories to shed new light and envision new futures by showing her readers what they might not have imagined before. I too wanted to go beyond the grand narratives of gender inequality, the ones that make the media headlines on gender inequality such as pay or sex-role discrimination. It is, I think, harder to look at the 'everyday', what Kim (2016) refers to as the small stories, the greyer areas of what happens in our immediate lives such as at home or in the workplace for example. I wanted to unravel the threads of the 'taken-for-granted' understandings and representations of knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.78) about women's professional lives. I wanted to explore the notion that behind the stories that are usually told are the ones that aren't (Allison, 1996, cited in Llangellier, 1999, p.3).

1.2 Situating the self

In my original research proposal I had planned my study around the adoption of a realist stance using a predominantly quantitative research design where “being objective is an essential aspect of competent inquiry” (Creswell, 2009, p. 7). Given my educational and early career background as a science and maths teacher in the secondary school system in Ireland, this would have been a natural path for me to follow. I was rooted in empiricism. However, as part of my structured doctoral programme, I attended a mandatory research methods summer school at Mary Immaculate College of Education (International Research Methods Summer School, 2014) where I was drawn to a number of presentations on arts-based research and one in particular given by Johnny Saldana on ethnodrama (Saldana, 2014). Saldana (2003, 2005, 2011, 2018) describes ethnodrama as the process of dramatising the ‘data’ in social inquiry. I expressed my interest in arts-based research to the programme leader at our next class meeting when we were discussing our proposal plans. It was suggested to me that I work with a colleague of his whose own doctoral work was on the gender narratives of student teachers, using an arts-based approach. I used the time in between then and my first meeting with my supervisor to explore the potential of working with narrative in my own study.

Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. xxvi) state that narrative can provide a means to understand life experiences, providing reference points “to stand on for imagining what experience is and for imagining how it might be studied and represented”. I found myself relating to their description of coming to narrative inquiry as a result of research careers spent quantifying experience, which had the effect of divesting that experience of its depth and richness for expression. Having worked as a second-level maths and science teacher in my early career, I went on to spend two years as a young research assistant working on statistical analyses of large-scale empirical educational attainment studies. I recall pestering the project leader with requests to accompany him on the scheduled site-visits to our participating schools. In this formative role (it was my first full-time job after college) I gained a level of comfort working with quantitative data which has served me well in my professional life to this day, but what I really took from these experiences was that I liked

talking with, and listening to, people much more so than analysing the numbers that were supposed to represent them.

The move towards narrative inquiry represented a substantive ontological and epistemological shift for me in terms of the conception of my research. Creswell (2009) chooses to use the term 'worldview' as a set of beliefs that guide action or inform our way of seeing the world. When challenged in the early stages of my doctoral coursework to articulate my own 'worldview', as a science major graduate I felt comfortable identifying myself with the scientific perspective, comfortable working predominantly with quantitative data. However, as my studies progressed and with exposure to research and writers in the qualitative paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; 2018) I began to experience a sense of what Maxine Green (1994, p. 425) refers to as unease or "restiveness" with the certainty of objective reality and the search for one uncontested 'truth' which characterises positivistic research. According to Coe (2012, p. 2) however the two differing perspectives may not necessarily always result in conflict nor be incommensurate with one another.

In particular, as I became more familiar with the work of narrative researchers in social inquiry such as Clandinin (2007), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Reissman (2002; 2008), Andrews, Squire and Tambouku (2013) and Kim (2016), and the creative work of ethnographers such as Ellis (2002; 2004; 2016), Ellis and Brochner (1996; 2016), Ellis and Rosiek (2018), Richardson (2013), Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2015), Holman-Jones (2016); Saldana (2003; 2005; 2006; 2008; 2010; 2011; 2018) and Spry (2001; 2006; 2007; 2013), I found myself leaning towards the adoption of a stance which recognises and gives voice to multiple realities (constructivism) in the quest to interpret new knowledge and find meaning (interpretivism) (Waring, 2012, p.16).

I align myself to the notion of a researcher's stance as being a 'way in' (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2010), an approach to the theory of knowledge itself and how to go about investigating it:

“(w)e see stance as the way that researchers position themselves in relation to their subjects, their participants and their own belief systems, and the way in which they locate themselves across the qualitative paradigm”.

(Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2010, p.4)

I began to realise that what I really wanted to do was speak to other women like me, and create the space for these women to tell stories of their own lived realities. I readily embraced an aesthetic desire to represent these realities using the creative arts (Barone and Eisner, 2012; Ackroyd and O’ Toole, 2010; McNiff, 2013) and with a personal interest in drama and the theatre arts since my college days, believed that I could work towards what Saldana calls ‘dramatising the data’ (Saldana, 2005; 2011; 2018) as a means of disseminating my research. Coe (2012, p. 9) identifies aestheticism as a research aim which seeks to “express, affirm or represent human experience” in a way that is engaging, surprising or attractive and cites Saunders (in Coe, 2012) as suggesting that it may even be used to communicate something “ultimately unsayable”. I felt heartened by the knowledge that in recent decades there have been challenges to the accepted formats of how we represent social reality to the academy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) and as the research community in the social sciences adapts to these changing times, we are learning how to re-present “us to ourselves” in new kinds of texts (Lincoln, cited in Colyar, J. and Holley, K., 2010, p.70). I found encouragement and affirmation in the direction my research was taking in the knowledge that these new forms of representations are becoming more widely accepted in the academy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

An integral part of Saldana’s (2018, p. 68) message is that as researchers, we cannot learn how to tell someone else’s story until we have learnt to tell our own. In the “process of observing, communicating with, and writing about others”, we study and learn about ourselves reflexively (Davis and Ellis, 2008, p. 853). As a researcher with insider member-based knowledge (Johnson, 2002, p. 107) of what it is like ‘being there’ as a woman in HE management in Ireland, by sharing my stories with the participants and co-creating with them new stories of our lived experiences, it is inevitable that I have come to know and see myself in these new, co-constructed stories. However, this does not mean that these are

now 'my stories'. The stories emerged as a result of a collaboration, a joint effort and they will remain neither mine nor theirs, but ours. In particular, to become an ethnodramatist, to creatively engage with the field material to produce a script, I needed to 'come to know' myself, as both co-participant (story-teller), and researcher (story-'reteller'). It is my belief that I could not have done so without the stock of knowledge that I have accrued, that insider member-based knowledge (Johnson, 2002), on the daily lived realities of being a woman in the role. It meant that I came to the research as a woman whose own experiences resonated with the lived realities of my participants, and as a narrative inquirer, I came with an insight with which to interpret those lived realities.

1.3 Rationale – Life as Lived

Lentin (2000, p. 247) states that there are some research projects which carry within them transformative properties for the researcher, particularly if there is a “resonance between the topic or approach and the personal context of the research”. My rationale for undertaking this inquiry stems from my own personal and 'lived' experience as a woman manager (Head of Department) in a higher educational institution (HEI) in Ireland over the last decade, specifically in the Institute of Technology (IOT) sector. My experience has coincided with the dramatic downturn in the economic fortunes of this country and the subsequent cut-backs and funding shortages in the public service (HEA,2011; 2012; 2013; 2014) along with the rise of the culture of “new managerialism” in HE (O' Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; Harford, 2020; Fuller and Harford, 2016; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011; Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009). In the service of the neo-liberal political agenda of marketisation and deregulation, 'new managerialism' was a new approach to public sector governance borrowed from business models of the 90s. In particular, Devine, Grummell and Lynch (2011) examined the impact of this neo-liberal managerial culture on the recruitment and retention of women into senior management posts across the Irish HE sector and found that senior managers are “stretched personally and professionally”, and as 'superleaders' they must “maximise the

investment of their selves” in their working lives (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011, p. 645).

In my own case, whilst coming to terms with this “investment of self” was indeed difficult, the steepest learning curve was coming to grips with the reality of my ‘place’ in the organisation, and my position in relation to the ‘gendered’ managerial hierarchy. Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen (2008, p.2) discuss the underlying problem of the gendered organisation whereby work practices and deeply rooted attitudes to male and female stereotyped roles have evolved “from the life experience of the traditional male breadwinner” so much so that women’s life and career experience which can include interruptions for child-birth, child-rearing, domestic and care responsibilities, can be systematically disadvantaged in this “male-normed institutionalised environment”. Lord and Preston (2009, p. 771) describe the experience of moving into a leadership role in higher education and the exposure to the “gendered nature of university operations” as being capable of taking “your breath away”. Devine, Grummell and Lynch (2011, p. 632) conclude that the culture of new managerialism in the Irish HE sector in particular has led to the crafting of an “elastic self” among senior postholders and “requires a relentless pursuit of working goals without boundaries in time, space, energy or emotion... (and) the experience of this elasticity is gendered”.

Epistemologies of experience and personal narrative can offer a deep understanding of a view of life as it is lived by an individual experiencing inequality. The individual’s position in a “web of intersecting inequalities” can then be politically empowering (Ginsberg and Tsing in Hamden, 2012) as it can engender power in others (Llangellier in Spry, 2001). Perhaps there is even an irony in the opportunity afforded by ethnography and narrative inquiry to examine “one’s place in a culture at the same time as one is trying to escape from it” (Klinker and Todd, 2007, p. 169).

1.4 The participants

The focus of this research study is on the ‘lived’ experience of being a woman in management and leadership in the third level or higher education (HE) sector in Ireland. Six female management post-holders in a third-level higher educational institute (HEI) in Ireland, and specifically an IOT, participated in this study. I met with these women over a 15-month period, conducting narrative interviews and co-creating (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) with them stories of our lived experiences as women in management and leadership in the sector.

At the time of data collection, one of the participants had had direct experience of executive or what might be termed ‘senior’ management in her respective institution while the remainder operated or continue to operate at what might be termed middle management (academic Heads of Department). By the time of submission of this dissertation, two of the latter have since been promoted either internally or externally to senior or executive management roles. In the annual institutional profile of all HEI’s in Ireland by the Higher Educational Authority (HEA, 2018b) senior academic staff are described as senior lecturer, associate professor or professor grade in the Universities, principal lecturer or senior lecturer in the Colleges and senior lecturer grades 1, 2 and 3 in the Institutes of Technology (IoT)³. Academic management appears therefore to be drawn from across the respective senior lecturing grades in each case and is not demarcated any further by the HEA⁴. However, 5 of the 6 participants had been or were still at SL2 grade or Head of Department in the sector at the time of the interviews.

³ From the academic year 2018/19, the HEA only included the SL3 grade in the IoT’s / TU Dublin to calculate the proportion of ‘Senior Academic Staff who are Female’. This is a departure from previous categorisations and effectively will act to ‘hide’ women who are making their way into management grades at SL2 or Head of Department level in the sector.

⁴ It should be noted that Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012, p. 50) use the term ‘senior’ relatively loosely in their case studies of senior appointments in HE, referring to their participant senior postholders as having had “extensive experience in senior management posts before they applied for their current position, ranging from heads of faculties *and* departments (the italics are mine) to deputy head or head of an institution”.

1.5 Research Objective

“.. despite the efforts that have been made by governments and institutions to bring about equality for women in the workplace, there remain some areas of that labour market that have not responded to those pressures. One such area is higher education and particularly so in terms of leadership positions in academia”.

(Eggins, 2017, p. xxi)

This story of a male dominated leadership environment in academia is one which has been well told both nationally and internationally (O’ Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; HEA 2018a; HEA, 2016; Harford, 2020, 2018, 2018b; Eggins, 2017; Fuller and Harford, 2016; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011; Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen, 2008), as has the description of the academy as a cold and ‘chilly’ climate, in which the devaluing of women has become socially normalised (Lord and Preston, 2009; Morley, 2013; The Chilly Collective, 1995). The gendered educational and institutional environment “creates an unequal playing field” through organisational work policies, interpersonal networks, and embedded attitudes” which favour the advancement of men (Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen, 2008, p. 1).

My research objective stems from the work of Butler (1999) on gender as a social construction, and de Beauvoir’s claim that one is “not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir, 1997, p. 295; Butler, 1999, p.43). My research intentions are to learn about the lived experiences of women operating in a predominantly male environment, and how they perform their duties in terms of the male norm as academic managers in the HE sector in Ireland. I too am one of those women. I am also the researcher, one who has what Aston and Harris (2006, p. 3) refer to as “an enduring ‘attachment’ to certain ideals as remaining important and necessary to improving the social and cultural welfare of women's lives”. As a consequence of this ideological ‘attachment’ I have adopted a feminist lens of inquiry. Feminist research practice is primarily about exposing and redressing gender inequality (Reinharz and Chase, 2002; van Son, 2000). Sellers et al. (2001, p. 45) discussing how feminism has tried to address the “deep structures at work in the oppression of

women”, state that women’s lives are “affected on all sides by various forms of explicit and implicit social, political, legal, symbolic and discursive control”.

Narrative inquiry is the process of gathering and representing information through storytelling and can provide a way of understanding and learning from lived personal experience. The telling of what could be termed the ‘*understory*’ of these women’s lives will add to the wider literature on gender studies by providing fresh insight into the daily lived realities of women operating in a predominantly male milieu.

1.6 Research Design

The research design of this narrative inquiry is underpinned by the adoption of a constructivist, interpretivist stance along with the use of feminist theory to examine the gendered experiences of women operating in a predominantly male environment.

Interpretive, naturalistic research assumes that the “social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated” (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p.19). Within this tradition, all knowledge is viewed as being socially situated. Interpretive frameworks are used by feminist researchers and align well with feminist theory (Pascale, 2011). Feminist research practice seeks to counter objectivism in the academy by taking a “view from somewhere” (Pascale, 2011; Harding, 1993). As an academic Head of Department in a HEI myself for over a decade, I chose to take a “view” from the vantage point of women who work in a similar role as myself and with whom I have developed a professional relationship over the last decade.

Critical feminist theory is a poststructural turn that aims to develop a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of gender inequality (Pascale, 2011). An intersection of critical theory, which examines issues of power and domination in society, and feminist theory, critical feminist research examines the production and reproduction of gender privilege in society. Feminist resistance theory in particular seeks to examine women and girls’ lived

experiences as agentic beings, who *act* as well as who are *acted upon*, thereby ‘resisting’ hegemony and patriarchal power domination. The theoretical framework of this research study is primarily informed by the writings of critical feminist theorist Judith Butler (1993; 1999) on the notion of gender as a social construction. It also draws on poststructuralist theorist Foucault’s (Foucault, 1994; Foucault, 1980; Tamboukou, 2013; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012; Barker, 1998) thesis of power as a non-tangible set of “power relations”, and his proposition that these power relations circulate, net-like, between human beings in society and its organisational structures. The interpretation of the participant narratives also looks to Noddings’ (1986) notions of ‘care and caring’ and Gilligan’s (1982, 1993) ethic of care, and builds on the more recent work on the impact of care responsibilities in women’s professional lives in HE management and leadership nationally and internationally (Lynch et al., 2020; Arnold and Loughlin, 2019; Harford, 2018; Morley, 2014; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011; Lynhc, 2010; Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009; Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen, 2008).

1.7 The Narrative Inquiry Stance

“Two or three things I know for sure, and one of them is that personal narrative surrounds us: pervasive, proliferating, multiplying, consolidating, dispersing”.

(Llangellier, 1999, p. 125)

Cohen, Mannion and Morrison (2000, p. 3) contend that the history of humanity is really about the story of our coming to terms with the world we live in and all research is fundamentally concerned with understanding that world. Clandinnin and Rosiek (2007, p. 36 - 37) suggest that the development of narrative research across multiple paradigms is testament to a desire within the research community to go beyond conventional boundaries and to fully realise the potential of social science research to make “a contribution to the study of human experiences”.

Lentin (2000) discusses the power of narrative to make sense of constructing rather than re-constructing lives. Narrative as inquiry therefore offers a mechanism for the interpretation of human experience, thereby bringing us to new knowledge and thus to change. Drawing on the theories of narrative of Baumann (1986) and Bruner (2004) and the work of King and Horrocks (2010), Polkinghorne (1995) and Kim (2016) on the processes of narrative smoothing, I find a mechanism to frame and interpret the participant narratives in the context of an arts-based narrative inquiry (see below, Section 1.8).

Narrative inquiry and the narrative interview in particular is considered by Josselson (2007, p. 539) to be a “relational endeavor,” where the data emerges from the establishment of a “deeply human” relationship with the participant. Adopting a narrative inquiry stance meant that I could approach the participant interviews from the reference point of well-established relationships with the participants. In narrative inquiry, the researcher’s own narratives of experience are central to the inquiry process and new knowledge emerges from the co-constructed stories of the researcher in collaboration with the researched (Clandinin and Murphy, 2009; Josselson, 2007; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000). I share the same professional role as the participants so I have come to this research with a store of similar lived experiences in the role. I am therefore a co-participant in this narrative inquiry. However, by virtue of being the researcher, I cannot share the research experience exactly as it is for the women who agreed to work with me. I have shared with them my stories as a female colleague in a similar professional role and this story-sharing has added an ‘insightfulness’ by virtue of the stock of, what Johnson (2002) refers to as, insider ‘member-knowledge’ which I have brought with me. As a co-participant, their stories of lived experiences in similar roles resonated with me, and mine with them. However, as the researcher, it is *I* who made the decisions about the direction this research has taken. It is *I* who framed the theoretical lens from which the research design emerged and through which the data has been viewed (Brinkmann, 2018). Thus, I could never be described as having had the same research experience as my co-participants. Rasavi, (cited in Bridges, 2001, p. 372) concludes that “by virtue of being a researcher, one is rarely a complete insider anywhere”. As the researcher, I necessarily remain on the outside. However, as a

narrative inquirer, I am also on the inside, deeply embedded in the storytelling and story-making relationship that is central to the narrative inquiry process. There are ethical issues for narrative inquirers with this dual positioning of simultaneously being both inside and outside of the research. This dual positioning creates a tension owing to our primary responsibility to the participants (Saldana, 2018, p. 538) with whom we are in an unusually intimate research relationship and our professional responsibility to the academy to engage in academically sound and ethically responsible research.

1.8 Narrative Inquiry and Arts-Based Research

Narrative inquiry recognises and privileges the storied life of the individual. Kim (2016, p.138) defines arts-based narrative inquiry as the accompaniment of the arts with narrative as a meaning-making tool in social inquiry which seeks to use creatively expressive art forms to make and convey meaning (Barone and Eisner, 2012). Kim views narrative inquiry that uses literary forms such as creative non-fiction, short story, poetry, drama and the novel as a subset of the broader arts-based research genre. According to Kim (2016, p. 136) arts-based research could be considered to be genre-blurring, as it is a ‘coming together’ of art and research or a process of “art into research”.

I first encountered the use of poetic forms through the course of my readings on ethnography and autoethnography (in particular Pelias, Richardson, Denzin and Weems in Holman-Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2013; Leavy, 2010; Ward, 2011; SuAndi, 2006; Ellis, 2004), narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016; Ely in Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000) and ethnodrama (Saldana, 2018, 2011, 2006, 2005; Spry, 2014, 2001). Like Noy (2005, p. 369), it was really during the transcription process that I first experimented with poetic writing in particular as one of the “myriad ways in which transcribed text can be graphically represented in an evocative... form”. Throughout literary history, poetry has been used to tell stories of loss and love, war and peace, the nature of man and his understanding of the world he finds himself in. Poetry is a way of telling stories and thus aligns well with a narrative inquiry.

“When a story is told in verse, there is room to... explore the act of storytelling”.

(Anderson, 2006, p.201)

I have always enjoyed reading, and on occasion, writing poetry. My natural affinity with the poetic form drew me in further and through my early work creating poetry emerging from the participant transcripts, I went on to explore it further in the writing of the ethnodrama. I also found ways to be creative and write poetically myself in this thesis.

In this arts-based narrative inquiry, emerging from our co-constructed stories in the participant interviews, I have therefore drawn on literary elements such as drama and poetry, as well as creative non-fiction or fictional ethnography (Kim, 2016, p. 141), to come to a new understanding about the lived experiences of women in HE management and leadership in Ireland.

Saldana (2003; 2005; 2010; 2011; 2018) encourages social inquirers to ‘think theatrically’ and imagine how our data could be presented in dramatic form. Plummer (in Hamdan, 2012, p.601) states that for narratives to flourish, there needs to be a community to hear and for communities to hear, there must be stories to weave together. Through this narrative inquiry, I have been weaving and knitting our stories together to create something akin to a patchwork quilt of lived experience. Like Eavan Boland (2001) in her poem ‘*Patchwork*’ I have collected a “sumptuous trash bag of colours... waiting to be cut and stitched and patched”. The theme of weaving together story threads into a composite central story emerging out of our shared, resonant experiences underpinned the thesis writing, culminating in the creation of an ethnodrama or ethnographic playscript as a means of disseminating the findings of this research.

In this research undertaking, as the researcher and co-participant, I designed and conducted a qualitative narrative inquiry to collect and co-construct the stories of women like myself in management and leadership roles in HE. Drawing on elements of literary and arts-based narrative inquiry, I have crafted these participant stories into literary forms such as creative non-fiction and poetry. I am also a novice playwright in Saldana’s sense who wove the story

threads that emerged from the co-constructed narratives into a short playscript of poeticised monologic vignettes, representing these stories of the daily lived realities of women like me in a textual but hopefully creative and artistically engaging form. In the future, I also aspire to provide a vehicle for the participants to speak directly to an audience by giving voice and breathing life through performance, thereby bringing meaning and understanding of the *'understory'* of the lived realities of the participants to potentially wider audiences.

1.9 Tensions

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the 'tension' that is created when moving across the boundary from formalistic to narrative inquiry. Formalism in the social sciences loosely refers to research that steers away from the individual and focuses on the institution or the organisation, while formalistic approaches to text analysis seek to similarly reduce the importance of the biographical or the cultural context. As I moved across the boundary from my own formative education in positivism and scientific inquiry, I was prepared for that tension to manifest itself over the lifetime of the study as I came to terms with constant ambiguity rather than the certainty of "theoretical precision" (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p.9) in data collection and analysis, for example. It also loomed large when I commenced the write up of the research. Goodall (2000) holds that postmodern-informed interview research suggests a more personal and perhaps even 'poetic' writing style, which is 'at odds' with the preference in the academy for the impersonal and objective traditional written report. Traditionally, writing in the social sciences has "mimicked" (Fontana 2002, p. 170) the dispassionate, guarded prose style of scientific writing. A more personal writing style was going to be a new departure for me, and one I had not had an opportunity to practise before now. Writing in the first person was always going to be a challenge and I had to work very hard to both find and sustain my own narrative voice.

Even in terms of the structure of the dissertation, I became an unlearning body as I attempted to “think with theory” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) and interweave it throughout the text (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 41) across the span of the dissertation, rather than exhaustively collated at the start. Moriarty (2013), p. 69) writes of her struggles in academia to go against the grain of academic conformity and write a dissertation which would encourage her readers to think “*with* rather than about the text”. Noy (2005, p. 366) similarly muses on the conventional “restrictions” around the writing of the dissertation, which is at the very heart of academia, whereby “graduating is a form of an institutionalized rite of passage, or better, rite of institution”. Engaging in arts-based inquiry, writing of lived experiences, writing creatively, perhaps even evocatively, could be seen as treading on dangerous ground, despite current trends for growing acceptance of the genre in what Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 10) refer to as this postmodern, experimental moment. To assuage my anxiety, I immersed myself in the literature available to me across the expansive field of qualitative research, focussing on arts-based research, narrative inquiry, autoethnography and ethnodrama in particular, to inspire my writing, and to published dissertations in the genre to support my choices (Kelly, 2016; Morrissey, 2015; Casey, 2010; Leitch, 2003).

In narrative inquiry, people are viewed as having lives that are “shaped by social and cultural narratives” (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 43) and are not just seen as representing ideas, theories or categories which could be analysed. Fontana (2002) states that no matter how well intentioned we are as postmodern researchers, using interview materials exclusively for our own purposes could be exploitative. From the point at which I started to meet and speak with the participants, I experienced a constant anxiety about where it might all go wrong, working as I was in the midst of people’s lived experiences. I remained steadfastly and nervously mindful throughout that unforeseen ethical conundrums could be lurking there, “waiting in the wings all along to make an entrance” (Saldana, 1998, p.193) due in no small part to the fact that the participants were for the most part sectoral colleagues with whom I had a pre-existing professional relationship.

Fusco (2008, p. 174) discusses the notion of 'readerly' texts, designed for linear reading which conform to positivistic research conventions (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). To adopt an ethnographic writing style on the other hand could enable me to move away from these constraints and result in a more 'writerly' (Silverman in Fusco, 2008) or 'messy' text', which Denzin describes as moving "back and forth between description, interpretation and voice" (Denzin, 1997, p. 225). Social life is itself "messy, uncertain and emotional" (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 9) and as such, writing about it should be too. Writing as a scholarly activity is not easy in any research paradigm, but I have found that ethnographical writing requires a lot of practise and a substantial amount of humility when starting out.

Challenges that loom too large can prove self-defeating. I could only use my best endeavours to make my writing a little less linear and a little less 'readerly' as I went along and see where that would take me. You the reader may notice that my writing strays at times and wanders back and forth across the borders between the 'readerly' and the 'writerly' text. I would ask your forgiveness for such transgressions and hope that you will bear with me as I find my narrative 'voice' over the first few chapters as I write myself into this research text.

1.10 Narrative Beginnings

'When you tell a story, it's your story. You're telling it makes it yours. Every time you tell a story, you're telling something about yourself'.

(Parkinson, 1998, p. 108)

Working with narrative strives to deliver an account of 'lived' experience, and as such needs to begin with stories of this experience. Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 46) hold that "stories lived and told educate the self and others" and that narrative inquiry necessitates researchers becoming "autobiographically conscious of our own reactions to our work". A researcher's personal narrative can act as a source of privileged knowledge (Hamdan, 2012)

as it is 'produced and reproduced' through reading, and I contend, writing. As a doctoral researcher in the ethnographic tradition, like Moriarty (2013) and Noy (2005), through the writing process, I have developed a deeper understanding of my own career and life experiences (Moriarty, 2013). Irrespective of the ontological or epistemological stance taken, all research can only ever start with the researcher, with where we are and with what we know already,. Narrative inquiry in particular is strongly autobiographical as our own storied lives shape our plotlines (Clandinin, 2018; Clandinin, Pushor and Orr, 2007; Clandinin, 2007; Leitch, 2015; Clandinin & Connolly, 2000).

Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013, p. 1) note that while narrative research "offers no automatic starting or finishing points", as a narrative inquirer, I can presume upon my own biography as a starting point. This research has a personal significance for me. My desire to undertake this study emerged directly from my personal lived experience as a woman in an academic leadership role in HE in Ireland. Therefore the very first story is my own – how and why I came to this research study, what Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 41) refer to as my "autobiographically-oriented narrative associated with the research puzzle" or my narrative beginnings which Dubnewick et al. (2018) contend have a formative role in shaping narrative inquires:

"In narrative inquiry, narrative beginnings are the beginning of the self-effacing, the autobiographical inquiry that keep us each asking who we are in each research study".

(Dubnewick et al. 2018, p. 413)

This ethnography then is one which presumes upon my deeply personal perspective as a woman whose experiences strongly resonate with those of the participants. It is therefore an ethnography that occasionally strays into the territory of autoethnography not least because of my unique positioning as being both an 'insider' as a co-participant in this narrative inquiry and an 'outsider' as the researcher (Rasavi, in Bridges, 2001). Straying at times into the territory of autoethnography has meant that I have borrowed from the creative writing styles prevalent in the tradition such as Ellis (2004; 2002), Ellis and Berger (2002), Davis and Ellis (2010), Ellis and Rawicki (2018) and the collated writings of

Richardson (2013), Weems (2013), Pelias (2013) and Denzin (2013) in Holman-Jones (2013). It is a writing tradition that celebrates subjectivity and privileges the personal and as such, is an enabler for creativity, which can open up “a reflexive world in which researcher and the researched join the reader to create a story” (Grant, Short and Turner 2013, p. 83). It is therefore ideally made for creative expression, for telling stories and for imagining, and re-imagining, the social world (Moriarty, 2013).

I have discussed my love of reading and writing poetry, and how I came to experiment with poetic representations as I began to interpret the participants’ transcripts, like Noy (2005, p. 369). This autobiographical piece, my “way in” to the research, was originally written as a prose piece and it was only in the very late stages that I redrafted it in poetic form as I felt that it was more sympathetic to the direction that this qualitative narrative inquiry took. I have interspersed my personal narrative with quotations from published literary writings that have resonated with me as I crafted the poem. I have also drawn upon the work of Chaplin (2011) and her use of a photo-diary, which she considers to be closely aligned with autobiographical writing as they are both methods of observing and writing the personal. I have therefore included photographs of my own life-story where I felt they added to it. These photographs are very evocative for me. Leitch (2006, p. 552) discusses the fact that despite the rise of the narrative movement, there can still exist an absolutist ‘turn to language’ that “suggests that nothing meaningful exists outside words”. Whereas she proffers an alternative view that not all meaningful experience need be reduced to that which can be narrated:

“Things that cannot be said are often at the core of our experiences: we are what we are”.

(Leitch, 2006, p. 552)

It is not easy to inject the ‘I’, to weave our own biography into the research story. There are choices to be made, decisions to take at every turn - where to start, how much or how little to include or omit, how to decide what adds value to the story over what might be deemed redundant or indeed, what might be just too intimate to share. I do not have

definitive answers to these questions, even having completed this thesis. I have little doubt that if asked to do it all over again, I might make completely different choices, and present a very different version of myself. As Clandinin (2018) states, it could always have been otherwise. All I know for sure (Allison in Llangelier,1999) is that at the time I composed this poem, these were the stories that I thought 'mattered' to the research story I am about to tell.

This is my story, the story of my autobiographical 'becoming' or my narrative beginnings, and the start of my journey as a qualitative narrative-inquirer delving into the understory of the lived experiences of women in HE management in Ireland.

1.10.1 'Exile' - An original autobiographical prose-poem.

'I didn't understand it then,

but I grew up in perpetual exile'⁵

In a north-side suburb of Dublin city,

the only daughter of parents who left behind their rural homes

to flee to the city where no-one really knew who

or where or what you had come from.



Caption: Dublin city, 1951-- the cinema on a Sunday.

Photograph taken on O'Connell Street, Dublin.

⁵ 'Francis' in Bolger, 1991, p.7 – 8.

My mother left her job when she got married
And stayed at home whether she wanted to or not.
My father planted our suburban garden in vegetables,
and later an allotment for the weekend, to stay connected with the land.

*“They planted trees in the image of their lost homeland,
put down potato beds, built timber hen-houses...
I’d hide among the alder bushes...
to watch the men dig and weed with the expertise of country hands”⁶.*

The heavy, loamy Wexford soil
was never fully scraped off my father’s shoes.

Me and my three brothers,
And a baby girl who slipped away at birth.
He could name her into existence –Deirdre, of the sorrows perhaps –
But my mother stayed silent and I remained the only girl.

⁶ ‘Francis’ in Bolger, 1991, p.6-7.



Caption: A first-child on the way, Circa 1961. A stillbirth.

I grew up an outsider, always ill-at ease in my urban home,
until I found a place with girls like me
whose parents listened to GAA⁷ matches on the radio,
sprawled on Summer sun-drenched lawns on any given Sunday.

*“When the radio announcer gave the results
of the provincial Gaelic matches
the backs would straighten,*

⁷ The acronym ‘GAA’ stands for the Gaelic Athletic Association and is a national sporting body founded in 1894 dedicated to the preservation of our national games of hurling, Gaelic football and handball. Growing up in suburban north-side Dublin in the 1970s, it was at that time the preserve of rural immigrants in my community.

*neighbours reverting to country allegiances
as they slagged each other".⁸*

Separated from my brothers by a tarmacked yard at school,
a red-bricked, two storied functional building, Lancastrian in dimension,
parquet floors and cold marble staircases,
windows too high up to see out.

Nuns in black habits. Some kind, I think, more not.

Fear, anxiety and dread.

But quick to learn, the days passed quickly
without attracting attention or worse, punishment.

My parents left school young, like most of their generation.⁹

The daily newspaper delivered to his mother's village shop
helped my father pass the school day until
there was nothing left to teach him.

As a young uneducated Irish man, he travelled to England

Over and back, like many of his kind.

⁸ 'Francis' in Bolger, 1991, p. 7.

⁹ Coolahon, 1981.

Then marriage, home and a duty to provide.

And still the newspaper.

Always reading, reading, reading.

He would tell us stories of growing up.

Hurling pitch and handball alleys

after a day's labour in the fields.

Twenty miles on a bicycle to go to a dance.

Cycling home a bit the worse for a drink or two.

The hardships of a farm labourer,

and for the farm women, an enduring sympathy –

no better than slaves, he would say.

The Ireland of his growing up was poor,

turned in on itself, socially striated,

subject to religious (Roman Catholic)

conformity and control.

A bitter memory of his village priest

banning a fledgling drama society

because the young men and women were mixing
'unsupervised'.

My mother had no romantic notions of rural life.

Growing up in a family of seven

on a small holding in the midlands.

She came to Dublin and never looked back.

Lack of opportunity and little formal education,

an aversion to risk, the expectations

of marriage and child-rearing.

To aspire beyond what you were born into was unheard of.

But fortune smiled on their children.

Free secondary education in 1966¹⁰

meant a Mercy convent secondary school for me,

and the Christian Brothers¹¹ for the boys.

Some of us at my school had academic ambitions.

¹⁰ Coolahan, 1981

¹¹ The Mercy Order and the Christian Brothers are two Catholic religious orders that continue to own and manage secondary schools in the Irish post-primary school system.

I studied hard and when I left school at 16,
I cycled past the female-dominated primary teacher-training college near home
and in through the gates of Trinity College, to study physics.

*“One has to be careful not to fall in the direction in which one naturally leans”.*¹²

A story from my father –
when he came to Dublin first,
he would cycle by those front gates of Trinity College
on his way to work in the dairy in Rathfarnham.

He wanted to work as a gardener in the grounds
where Catholics should not enter.

He promised himself that one day his children
would walk through those gates to study, not work.

And we all did.

I remember a first-year physics class
given by Professor C. He worked hard

¹² Lines from ‘Colette’, Mueller, 1986, p. 15.

to make sure very few girls (*and there were very, very few girls*)
would choose his precious subject for their final degree.

I must have chosen it to spite him.

I had never been treated as 'different' before,
or 'lesser' than my brothers or boys of my own age.
Growing up, our house was really about the boys
and I just fitted in.



Caption: North Dublin Suburb, circa 1976 –

A perpetual tomboy, hungry for adventure.

I mended bicycles, mowed lawns
and helped my father when he was fixing the car.

I was as good on the on the GAA pitch as any of the boys.

And all grown up, I still prefer the company of men.

A late 'eighties recession after I graduated,

I succumbed and trained as a secondary-school teacher.

Into the classroom for a few years...

But I quickly grew a bit bored.

I found my way into educational research.

Statistical analysis of school-attainment data. I was good at it,

but I soon noticed that all the decision-makers were male,

and all the 'doers' were female.

I wanted to decide as well as 'do'.

I found my feet eventually training

pre-service teachers in a University department of education.

Formative. Rewarding. Challenging. Social.

I felt like I was making a difference.

I could have stayed there forever.

Marriage, the birth of my daughter and separation
in a very short space of time –
let's not dwell, it does not define me –
took me away to a small, rural town.

Just me and my baby-girl.

Loneliness and isolation.

Often looking to travel back home to my parents,
to be the 'daughter' again instead of the 'mother'.

Echoes of my parents, a duty to provide.

I worked and I worked. And I *became* 'mother.'

and every now and again, when I went back home to my own parents,

I was 'daughter' when I needed to be.

Short-term, temporary and part-time contracts
in community development and further education
where I could get them and when I could do them.
Night-time, weekends, summer holidays.

Then a Head of Department job was advertised -

I wonder now did anyone else even apply for it? -

I needed the money and the financial security.

I could start to live a little again, instead of hand to mouth.

*“Most women in this country are only one man away from welfare”.*¹³

It always feels like I just fell into the job

and I have always dismissed it

as being a case of getting

the best-paid position I could find.

But maybe, just maybe,

I made a conscious decision to *‘lean in’*¹⁴

because I wanted to *make* decisions,

to be a *thinker* and not just a *‘doer’*, like before.

And I had begun to make friends

with some of the (*mostly male*) management team.

I recognised myself there, amongst the *‘boys’*.

Just like when I was growing up.

¹³ *Steinem, 1983, p.8*

¹⁴ *Sandberg, 2013.*

I have been in this role for over a decade now.

I manage 350 students, 20 lecturing staff,
and have worked across 2 Schools,
and 3 different academic departments.

That very first year

I felt like I was sleep-walking though the job.

The weight of management responsibilities,
the sheer volume of work...

And oscillating, always oscillating.

Between being on the outside and on the inside.

Outside of myself

as a mother when I am in work.

Inside in a mostly male team where I felt comfortable,
but always outside of them as a woman.

Outside my department colleagues -

I am not one of them -

but inside as a woman in a female-dominated
team in the humanities and social sciences.

Constantly working “within but against the grain”.¹⁵

Within and against myself as a mother and lone parent, trying to work full-time.

Within and against the dominant grouping of lecturing staff, as a manager.

Within and against the patriarchal management system I found myself in, as a woman manager.

Sometimes in that first year

I was happy to be shut away from it all,
in an office on my own, in a form of exile
but this time self-imposed.

Taking refuge from the madness
that seemed to inhabit the corridors of power,
to which I had yet to grow accustomed...
as if that were ever possible.

(Original prose poem)

¹⁵ Spivak in Landry and Maclean, 1996, p. 214

1.11 Conclusion

By celebrating subjectivity and privileging the personal, ethnography is an enabler for creativity, and creativity “opens up a reflexive world in which researcher and researched join with the reader to create a story” (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013 p. 83). It is therefore ideally made for telling stories, for creative self-expression, for imagining and re-imagining the social world (Moriarty, 2013). Despite the growing acceptance of arts-based research, and ethnodrama in particular, as a mode of research representation within qualitative inquiry (Saldana, 2003; 2005), it can still be seen as a somewhat ‘risky enterprise’ (Saldana, 2003; Warren, 2008; Denzin, 1997). However, it aligns readily with a worldview that seeks to study the world from the perspective of living, subjective, interacting human beings (Denzin, 1997).

Connolly and Clandinin (1990, p. 7) conclude that at the end of a narrative inquiry it is often not clear when the writing of the study actually began. The act of writing is at the very heart of epistemologies of lived experience. I gradually came to terms with the need to experiment, and explore, with my own writing style as I navigated the boundaries between formalistic research writing that is more readily acceptable to the academy and the more personal and personalised writing styles prevalent in narrative inquiry. Over the course of the thesis write-up, I gradually embraced the uncertainty of the methodology (Clandinin, 2018, p.5) and as a consequence, the uncertain and perhaps ‘messy’ text (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2010; Fusco, 2008; Denzin, 1997) and the associated risks when working with personal narrative.

Clandinin (2018) tells us that “what is really important in narrative inquiry is that you have to ... do some of what we call autobiographical narrative inquiry, some self-effacing”. To that end, the first story needed to be that of my own “narrative beginnings” (Dubnewick et al., 2017) and how I came to this research puzzle. Later, in Chapter 3, I will introduce my fellow co-participants, all female Heads of Department or Heads of School in an IOT in Ireland, who have travelled the road with me on this research journey.

The pathway to the realisation of my research ambitions as narrated in this dissertation is as follows:

- Chapter 1 in which I outline the path I chose to follow on this journey, from my research intentions through to the research design and the adoption of an arts-based narrative inquiry stance. I conclude by offering my own narrative beginnings as my 'way in' to this research text.
- Chapter 2 in which I provide the socio-political context and background to this study by examining the a) HE landscape in Ireland b) the current literature on women in management and leadership in HE both in Ireland and internationally and c) the underlying theoretical framework for this study on the gendered career experiences of women in the sector.
- Chapter 3 in which I elaborate on the philosophical and methodological framework underpinning the research design of this literary arts-based narrative inquiry.
- Chapter 4 in which I am in the 'midst of stories' (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 63) and discuss the narrative and arts-based research methods employed in this study.
- Chapter 5 in which I unravel and present the story threads in the participant narratives.
- Chapter 6 in which I tease out these story threads under the lens of feminist inquiry.
- Chapter 7 in which I weave together these threads to reconfigure and construct a new story, from which I craft an ethnodramatic playscript, and reflect on the arts-based methodology.
- Chapter 8 in which I look back on the learning from the research and seek to leave the reader with a storied 'impression' (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015) of 'life-as-lived' as a woman in HE management and leadership in Ireland.

Chapter 2 On Landscape, Leadership and a Lens of Inquiry - some context on a study of Women in Higher Education.

“Why is there gender inequality? The reason why women are not to be found in the same proportion as men in the most senior positions is not because women are not talented or driven enough to fill these roles, it is because numerous factors within HEIs, conscious and unconscious, cultural and structural, mean that women face a number of barriers to progression, which are not experienced to the same degree by their male colleagues; systematic barriers in the organisation and culture within higher education institutions mean that talent alone is not always enough to guarantee success”.

(HEA, 2016, p. 9)

“Gender inequality in higher education is an internationally observed issue. Women continue to be ‘vastly under-represented in top positions within the higher education sector’ as well as in ‘top academic decision-making positions’ across Europe”.

(HEA, 2016, Executive Summary)

I referred in Chapter 1 (Section 1.10) to the occasional transgression that might occur as I find my footing in these new territories of ethnographic writing and the development of my own narrative voice. I must admit to having agonised in particular over how to present this section. As an interpretive research ‘bricoleur’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) however I feel the need to draw on some information, some facts and figures if you will, that will help to set the context for the lived experiences of the women who have participated in this study.

The participants all come from within the Institute of Technology sector in Ireland, as do I. Ireland’s third level sector has operated as a binary system of provision with both traditional universities and what have been termed Institutes of Technology (IoT) providing third level education in tandem since the mid-1970s. In recent years, there have been a number of institutional mergers with the development of a third entity, Technological Universities. The origin and history of the IoTs goes a long way to explain the unique HE organisational culture. This is explored in the next section, along with the impact of neo-liberalism and

the adoption of ‘new-managerialism’ (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012) in the HE sector in Ireland over the last decade.

2.1 The Higher Education Landscape in Ireland – how did we get here?

2.1.1 A binary system, the ‘knowledge economy’ & the transformation of the HE sector

I have been a Head of Department in the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector in Ireland for well over a decade now. My lived experience as a woman in academic management has been garnered exclusively in this sector, though I have prior experience of teaching and lecturing in both the further education (FE) and the University sectors also. My current role therefore within the IoT sector provides me with a lens of personal experience and a unique vantage point from which to view the world of women in academic management in a Higher Educational Institute (HEI) in Ireland. There has been what McCoy and Smyth (2011, p. 243) refer to as a ‘two-tier’ or binary system of higher educational provision in Ireland since the mid-1970s – the first tier or university sector existing alongside the second tier or IoT sector – and each with “distinct historical contexts and positions within Irish education”.

The binary system emerged out of a period of significant transformation in the higher educational landscape in Ireland in the latter half of the twentieth century, driven primarily by government policy from the late-1950s onwards to promote economic development (Loxley, Seery and Walsh, 2014, p. 20) after decades of post-war protectionism (Walsh, 2018, p. 223). Ireland’s Higher Education institutions had been operating relatively autonomously to this point and were strongly focused on the education of the professional elite, the then Taoiseach¹⁶ Eamonn De Valera himself openly acknowledging that entry was primarily by means over merit (Walsh, 2014, p. 9). Walsh (2018, p. 222) further notes that between 1962 and 1965, “only 2% of the population aged 15-19 and 3.4% of the population aged 20-24 at the time of the 1961 census were enrolled in third -level education”. It was

¹⁶ ‘Taoiseach’ is the Irish language term for the leader of the largest political party in the Dail (or Parliament).

an unashamedly elitist system, entry to which was determined exclusively by social class and family expectation.

In line with most other European countries at the time, the dominant educational ideology of the new state was underpinned by a religious or theocentric paradigm, but this shifted from the late 1950s onwards towards a mercantile paradigm, which had “economic considerations at its core” (Walsh, 2014, p. 6). The major outcome of this ideological shift was a move away from an elitist system to one of diversification and massification in the service of national economic development. Arising out the findings of a 2004 OECD report on the benefits of non-university institutions in widening both access and diversity in the sector, the Regional Technical Colleges (RTC’s) were established (Government of Ireland, 1969) to provide such a route. The first of these colleges opened in 1970 and by 1974, there were a total of nine colleges operating in both city (Cork and Galway) and rural town locations (Sligo, Letterkenny, Tralee, Athlone, Dundalk, Carlow and Waterford), widening participation in terms of not only alternative entry pathways but also as a direct consequence of their strategic regional remit and accessible locations (Walsh, 2014, p22; Walsh, 2018, p. 261). Their origin from within the second level system was also to have profound implications on their recruitment and employment practices of academic staff (Loxley, 2014, p. 127). These practices were firmly embedded in the highly unionised organisational culture of the second level system, which is not the case in the university sector and this distinction continues to this day.

The 1990s was marked by the recognition of the role of HE in economic development in terms of human capital development (Loxley, 2014, p. 37). Government policy was shaped to ensure state intervention on the matter of HE structures and governance, financial accountability and “even the types of programmes being offered” (Walsh, 2014, p. 38). The 1992 Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* in particular paved the way for sustained state involvement in HE in Ireland thereafter – it gave a form of “politicised imprimatur” to state intervention in HE (Loxley, 2014, p. 38). This new policy direction ensured resources were to be directed towards strategically important activities and imposed greater fiscal

accountability and established a system of quality assurance or monitoring of the core HE functions of teaching and learning.

Throughout the nineties, there was an increased government focus on HE as a driver of economic development and prosperity, linked to its capacity for research and innovation and the consequent creation of a modern, technically skilled graduate workforce. With the beginnings of an economic boom in the mid-90s, leading on to a sustained period of economic growth over the next ten years famously labelled the 'Celtic Tiger', policy makers increasingly looked to advances in HE to chart the way forward. The underlying theme of the 2004 OECD review of HE was its contribution to a 'knowledge-based economy' whilst endorsing the binary structure as a means of achieving this due to the i) regional remit of the IoT sector and ii) its capacity to widen participation in terms of increasing numbers of part-time learners and iii) its unique offering of sub-degree provision. Following on from the 2004 report, when the IoTs came under the auspices of the Higher Educational Authority (HEA) alongside the universities¹⁷, the two-tiered system of HE provision was to collectively spearhead the national objective of a knowledge-driven economy.

The international economic crash of 2007-8 brought about the end of the 'Celtic Tiger', and the next phase of policy development in the HE sector arose out of a national period of public austerity involving swingeing financial cuts in public spending. As a consequence of successive government policy of control and intervention since the late eighties, the Irish HE sector was and continues to be heavily reliant on state funding (Loxley, 2014, p. 124). However, "between 2008 (the peak year for funding) and 2010, the allocation to the Institutes of Technology (IoT) and universities had fallen by 14% or 238 million and a further 5% between 2012 and 2013". The public sector was to be subjected to a suite of austerity measures were including pay cuts, performance management reviews, the possibility of redeployment, and a moratorium on recruitment and promotion via the ECF or Employment Control Framework (Loxley, 2014, p. 125).

¹⁷ Prior to this, the IoT's fell under the remit of the Department of Education, which also oversaw both first and second level education.

In 2011, the Department of Education published the Hunt Report, or Ireland's *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. It envisioned a revitalised HE sector that would play a key role in the post-recession economic, social, and cultural renewal of the nation (O' Shea and O' Gara, 2019, p. 339). The broad recommendations of the Hunt report could be summarised as the confirmation of the principle and practice of state intervention in HE; structural and governance reform to ensure even further accountability to the state; the establishment of a programme of rationalisation within the sector to reduce duplication and hence financial waste, and an affirmation of the government's commitment to increasing participation in HE. Walsh and Loxley (2015, p. 1128) assert however that the Hunt report was really about rationalisation and that HE was in fact being "re-positioned as a 'cure and restorative' for the economic failures and structural deficiencies manifest during and after the Celtic Tiger era (1995 – 2007)".

A series of policy documents subsequently emerged in the aftermath of Hunt which sought to implement "and give a flavour" of the Hunt recommendations in practice (Walsh and Loxley, 2015). The first of these – *Towards a Future Higher Educational Landscape* (HEA, 2012) - developed on Hunt's notion of a rationalised HE sector suggesting a smaller number of larger institutions. The proposal was for a range of institutional types each with a distinct mission, including traditional universities and institutes of technologies operating alongside a new entity, the technological university (TU). The rationale for the development of the TU's was strongly political, emerging primarily from a decade-long drive by Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) for a university of the south-east, and Walsh (2018, p. 461) goes so far as to state that a detailed academic rationale for TU's was never in fact "properly articulated". Ahmadvand et al. (2012) undertook a meta-analysis of documented international university and institutional mergers and found that the most important reasons were as follows:

"to boost efficiency and effectiveness, deal with organizational fragmentation, broaden student access and implement quality strategies, increase government control on higher education systems, decentralization and to establish larger organizations".

(Ahmadvand et al., 212, p. 736)

Hinfelaar (2012) identified what she referred to as ‘push versus pull’ drivers for the proposed institutional mergers in Ireland. Economic survival was the main ‘push’ factor for IoT’s which were more severely affected by the new funding regimes compared to universities, while the principal pull factor was the draw of “coveted university status” (Hinfelaar, 2012, p. 41). In 2012, the incumbent Minister for Education stated that a key priority for the creation of the TU’s was in fact to prevent ‘mission drift’ within the binary HE sector and to re-affirm the government’s commitment to technological education (in Walsh, 2018, p. 460) which had been the specific rationale for the development of the IoTs in the first place. To date, three TU’s have been thus designated¹⁸.

In 2013, the national higher education system performance framework (HESPF) (HEA, 2013) was published by the HEA and thus began the process of annualised institutional reporting using the metrics and performance indicator approach envisioned by Hunt, although its actual implementation in the intervening years has been found to be weakened by an overemphasis on microdetail at the expense of more its intended strategic ambitions (O’ Shea and O’ Gara, 2019). The next decade was to be characterised by a, once again, re-purposed, rationalised and highly-audited HE sector capable of producing the modern, adaptable and technologically-advanced graduate, fully equipped to meet the labour force demands of an emerging knowledge economy (O’ Shea and O’ Gara, 2019; Walsh, 2018; Walsh and Loxley, 2015).

2.1.2 Neo-Liberalism and NPM or ‘New Managerialism’

It might be salient at this point to introduce the topic of the rise of neo-liberalism and its associated discourse of public sector management or New Public Management (NPM) in

¹⁸ TU Dublin, January 2020 (Tallaght Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown Institute of Technology, Dublin Institute of Technology); Munster Technological University, January 2021 (Institute of Technology, Tralee, Cork Institute of Technology); Technological University of the Shannon, October 2021 (Limerick Institute of Technology, Athlone Institute of Technology); Atlantic Technological University to be designated in 1st April 2022 (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Letterkenny institute of Technology, Sligo Institute of Technology).

the democratic west from the 1980s onwards. The recommendations of the Hunt report (2011) and its subsequent strategic implementations (HEA, 2012; HEA 2013) could be argued to have “followed a similar script to NPM reforms in the British system” a decade or more earlier (Walsh and Loxley, 2015, p. 1137) and which were also readily embraced in the anglophone countries of Australia, New Zealand and the US.

Neo-liberalism became the dominant governmental model in democratic western economies in the aftermath of the international oil crisis in the 1970s (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012). It is perhaps most closely associated with the era of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US (Burke, 2018) and their glorification of free-market economics endorsed by the state. With the support of willing governments “big business once again gained the upper hand, workers’ wages and conditions were reined in, and the global market dominated government decision-making” (Davies, Gottsche and Bansel, 2006, p. 309). It was in fact a way of off-loading the cost, and what were previously the responsibilities, of the state by governments onto the people it purported to govern (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p. 8).

Giroux (2010) contends that under the corporate “fairytale” that is neo-liberalism, everything either is for sale or is “plundered for profit” as “neo-liberalism wages an incessant attack on democracy, public goods, and non-commodified values” (Giroux, 2010, p. 194). More specifically, Giroux held that what is under attack is in fact the state’s social contract to expand the public good and to provide access to housing, health care, transport, amenities and education for example, the burden of which has now shifted to its citizens. He contends that the social contract forms the very basis for the conditions on which democracy and active citizenship is experienced by people. “Rapacious” (p. 196) free trade policies have succeeded in distributing wealth upwards and undermining civic-mindedness as the free market and profit-making are now the basic organising principles upon which society is built. Citizenship itself has become an almost “privatized” affair (Giroux, 2010). Neo-liberalist government is thus characterised by market-deregulation, commodification, mass-consumerism and a “ruthless competitive individualism” (p. 198). It has allowed powerful corporate entities to amass wealth, power and privilege whilst leading to a society

of low-skilled labour and “permanent insecurity” (p. 200). Giroux (2018, 2010) railed against the impact on higher education in the US, which he believes is now “held hostage” to market forces and functional utilitarianism, recognised only for their contribution to profit (2013, p.8). It has in essence become vocationalised (2010, p. 235). Neo-liberalism is not a neutral economic strategy but is in fact “an ideology, a politics, and at times a fanaticism” (Giroux, 2010, p. 201) and as such, it is critical that its imposition is resisted and education is wrested free from what he terms this neo-liberal pedagogy. Affecting all levels of schooling, it acts to stifle critical thought, “reducing citizenship to the act of consuming... and removing the discourse of democracy from any vestige of pedagogy both in and out of schooling” (p. 201).

Davies and Bansel (2007) discussing the impact of neo-liberalism and education in both Australia and New Zealand draw on Foucault’s notion of governmentality such that it refers not only to the political structures that underpin acts of government but also to the ways in which peoples’ behaviour can even be directed (Davies and Bansel, 2007, p. 248). The authors argue that neo-liberalism produces “docile subjects who are tightly governed and who, at the same time, define themselves as free” (p. 249). They experience the new form of governmentality as “something they are responsible for” and the powers of the state are “directed at empowering entrepreneurial subjects in their quest for self-expression, freedom and prosperity” (p. 249-250). Through what the authors refer to as the “technology of choice”, individuals have willingly taken on responsibility for areas of care that had previously been the responsibility of the state. And through “technologies of government” individual desires became attached to government desires “and both were tied to the market” (p. 251) for their survival.

New Public Management (NPM) is an associated discourse of neo-liberalism which underpinned the reform agenda of public services in neo-liberalist states, including education. Discussing the origins of public sector reform in the Irish HE context, Walsh (2018, p. 330) observes that Thatcher’s UK government was “equally suspicious” of student unions and academics as she was of trade unions. As such, NPM became the dominant model of public service management in HE in the UK in the 1980s. Whilst it did not make an

impression on the Irish system at that time, it had become firmly established by the mid-1990s (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p. 8). Davies and Bansel (2007) note that it was in schools in Australia and New Zealand that the new system of governmentality was first rolled-out, and the education system in Ireland was equally well placed for a similar adoption in the nineties after a decade of emigration and an education system that “was held largely accountable... as it had failed to deliver the technologically skilled workforce that was deemed essential for the industrialized era” (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p. 9).

Mirroring the objectives of neo-liberalist economics, the culture of NPM or ‘new managerialism’¹⁹ has been fully endorsed by the Irish government in both the wider public service (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p. 11) and the HE sector (HEA 2013; HEA, 2012; HEA, 2010). It emphasises outputs over inputs and objectifies organisational goals with exacting reporting structures. It uses the neo-liberalist language of the market-place when discussing its ‘service-users’ (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p. 4) and emphasises “the ownership of the means of knowledge production” with a push towards the commercialisation of knowledge (Lynch, 2010) and the development of online teaching and learning platforms (Peters, 2013, p. 13). The austerity following the global economic crash of 2008 post the ‘Celtic Tiger’ years acted to “further mobilise” the neo-liberalist agenda in the HE sector in Ireland such that, according to Holland, Hughes and Leitch (2016), there is value now only on what can be readily measured “rather than measuring what should be valued”. Davies and Bansel (2007, p. 254) conclude that neoliberalism, unlike liberalism, “withdraws value from the public good”.

This is the sector that I recognise as a female academic manager or Head of Department in a TU (formerly an IoT) – a HE environment that is corporatised, commercialised (Lynch et al. 2020), subject to performance measurement at both institutional and individual level (Peters, 2013, p. 12) with the ever-present threat of commercial unviability (Harford, 2018a,

¹⁹ ‘New Managerialism’ is the term used in the Irish context in the seminal work by Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) and will thus be adopted heretofore in this study.

p. 7; Levidow, 2002, p. 227) down to department level. Davies, Gottsche and Bansel (2006) discussing the effects of this new culture on academic staff conclude that questioning or dissent can be construed as a form of organisational disloyalty or even a failure to support “the manager” who in turn is working “to keep the institution afloat economically and so protect workers’ jobs” (Davies, Gottsche and Bansel, 2006, p. 308). My personal and ‘lived’ experience of the role of academic manager in HE has thus coincided with the rise of neo-liberalism in the social and political milieu in Ireland and the implementation of ‘new managerialism’ in HE (Lynch et al., 2020; Harford, 2020; O’ Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; Harford, 2018; Burke, 2018; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Lynch, 2010; Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009) with its attendant culture of audit technology, anxiety and job insecurity (Davies and Bansel, 2007).

According to Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012, p. 3), neo-liberalism was a radical change in the “spirit of capitalism” and the adoption of ‘new-managerialism’ as the dominant model of management in HE in Ireland was never a “neutral” political strategy, and neither was it a gender-neutral one (Lynch, 2020).

2.2 A Systematic Disadvantage - Women in HE

“As girls’ educational expectations rise at a faster pace than those of boys, so does their academic performance as measured by persistence, repetition, academic achievement and transition into secondary education. Once they gain access to higher education, women exceed men in grades, evaluations and degree completions. This growth should be seen as a positive development that reflects the changing values and attitudes related to the role and aspirations of women in society”.

(UNESCO World Atlas of Gender Equity in Education, 2012, p. 21)

2.21 Women in Society – an Overview

The UN records that women’s full and equal participation in society is a fundamental human right, yet “around the world, from politics to entertainment to the workplace, women and girls are largely underrepresented” (UN Woman, 2020). Statistics collated by UN Woman

(www.unwoman.org) records that globally only 1 in 4 parliamentarians are women as of January 1st 2020. By October 2019, there were only 10 women Heads of State and 13 women Heads of Government across 22 countries. And as of June 1st 2019, in the Fortune 500 series of the world's highest grossing companies, only 7% of the CEOs were women.

In Ireland in 2019, the CSO gender equality report (CSO, 2019) found that the vast majority (90.9%) of workers in skilled trades were male while most workers (79.3%) in a category labelled 'caring, leisure and other services' were female. Two in every four men worked for 40 hours or more each week (52.8%), compared to just one in four women (24.7%) and there were large variations in employment rates between women depending on whether they had children or not ranging from 88.1% for women in a couple with no children to 66.8% for women whose youngest child was aged between 4 and 5 years of age, a significant difference of 21.3 percentage points. Noticeably, being with or without children had a much smaller effect on the employment rate for men

Currently, there is a 14.4% difference between the average wages of men and women in Ireland, across all sectors, which is just slightly ahead of the OECD average of 16% (PwC Ireland, 2021). In the most recent CSO Gender Balance in Business Survey (CSO, 2021), women make up only 3% of senior executives in large enterprises in Ireland in 2021, while only 22% of the membership of the Board of Directors are women and only one in eight or 13% of CEO's are women.

The gender balance of Irish senior civil servants is equally skewed as an ESRI report of 2020 states:

“Women make up the majority of workers in the Irish civil service. However, the female share falls sharply the further up the occupational ladder we look. In 2016, 63 per cent of civil service employees were female, but this ranged from 75 per cent of those in the entry level grade of Clerical Officer to 21 per cent at top rung of the ladder at Secretary General level”.

(Enright and Russell, 2020, p. 1)

Interestingly, the CSO Gender Equality report (2019) reveals that in the Irish Civil Service, the middle management grade of Administrative Officer was the most gender balanced of all grades. This is a trend that is also replicated in the roles women occupy in Higher Education in Ireland which I will now discuss.

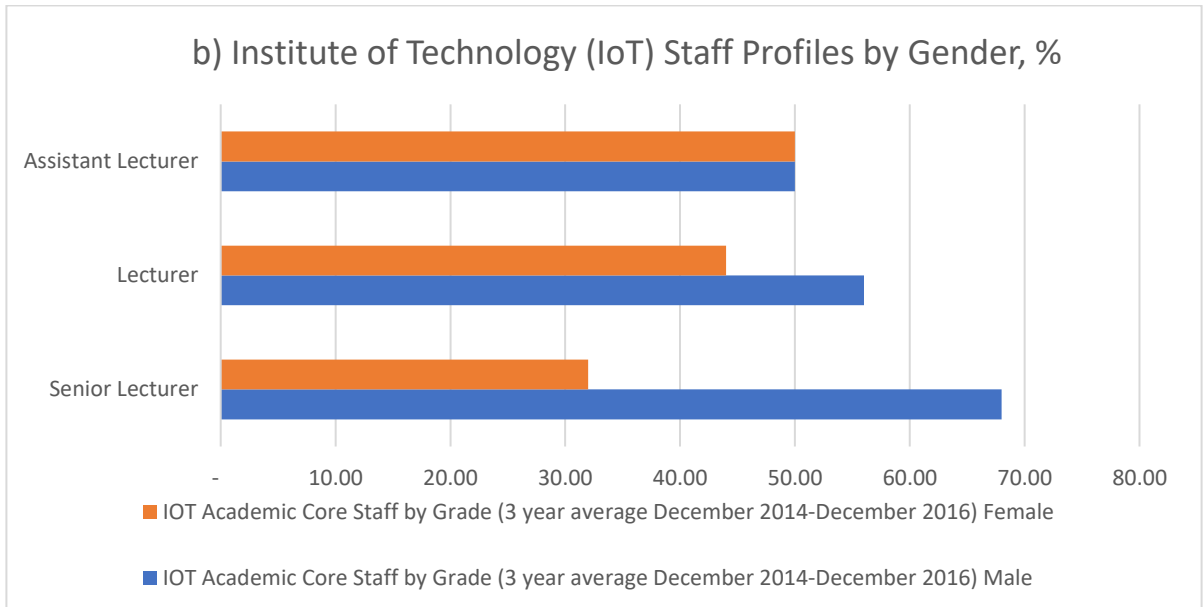
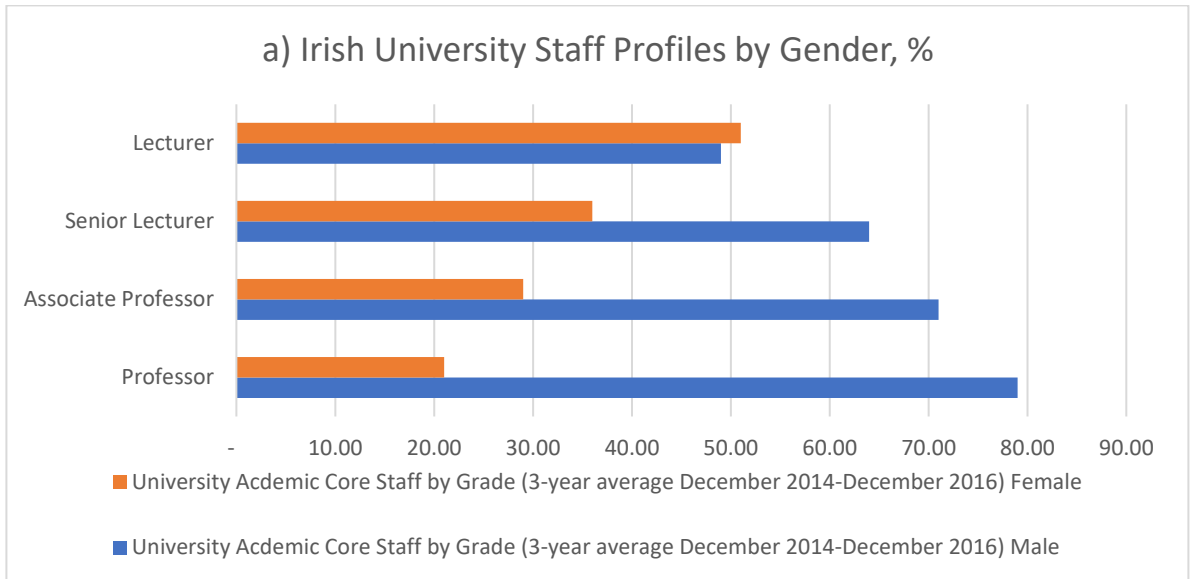
2.22 Women in Higher Education in Ireland

“Positions of power and decision-making within all areas of education are disproportionately held by men, this is especially true of higher education”.

(Lynch, 2010, p. 54)

O’ Connor (2014) states that between 1990 and 2012, there was a distinct disinterest in the promotion of gender equality as an agenda in government higher educational policy and the publication of the Hunt report of 2011 in fact saw any “concern for gender” disappear altogether (O’ Connor, 2014, p. 6). The academic year 2011/2012 was the first time that the Higher Educational Authority (HEA, 2017) actually gathered staffing gender breakdowns in Higher Educational Institutes (HEI’s) in Ireland. It is now a core part of the annual institutional reviews. The following graphs (Figure 2.1) illustrate the gender inequality in the breakdown of male to female representation at various grades in the staff profiles of both the IoT’s and the Universities as a three-year average December 2014 – December 2016.

Figure 2.1 Staff Profiles by Gender in the Irish Third Level Sector



Ref: Higher Education Institutional Staff Profiles by Gender, July 2017.

Note: In the IoT sector, Head of Department is a Senior Lecturer 2 Grade.

It is well documented in the literature that management and leadership roles (including academic leadership in the form of senior lectureships, associate professorships and full professorships) in Higher Education remain male-dominated both nationally and internationally (Harford, 2020: Harford, 2018; O'Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2018; HEA 2018a; Goastellec & Vaira, 2017; Eggins, 2017; HEA 2016; Fuller and Harford, 2016: Morley 2014; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Chappel and Waylen, 2013; Devine, Grummell and Lynch 2011; Billing, 2011; Grummell, Devine and Lynch 2009; Lord and Preston 2009). Viewed by some as a 'chilly climate' (O' Connor, 2014, p. 90; The Chilly Collective, 1995) or a 'gentlemen's club' (O' Connor, 2014, p.67), Bilen-Geen, Froelich and Jacobsen (2008) describe the 'gendered' HE organisation as one in which work practices and embedded attitudes to male and female stereotyped roles have evolved from the life experience of the traditional male wage earner. Women's life and career experience, which can include interruptions for childbirth, child-rearing, general domestic and care responsibilities, can be "systematically disadvantaged in this male-normed institutionalized environment" (Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen, 2008, p. 2).

In the university system in Ireland, the 2016 HEA review of gender equity in HE showed that while 52% of entry-level academic positions were filled by women, women accounted for only 19% of Professorships and the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) was found to have the lowest proportion of female Professors at just 13%. NUIG reached an out of court settlement late in 2017 with one of five female academics who pursued gender inequality cases claiming discriminatory promotional practices at the University when they were unsuccessful in their applications for promotion to Senior Lecturer grade in 2008/2009 (Murray, 2017). The Equality Tribunal described NUIG's interview process for staff seeking promotion as "ramshackle", its attitude towards maternity leave "unjustified" and its overlooking of weaknesses in the CV's of male staff "worrying" (McDonald, 2014).

A similar picture presents itself in the UK. According to the *Equality in Higher Education: Statistical Report (2017)* only one in five female academics earned over £50,000 (22.2% of female academics compared to 35.6% of male academics). While the percentage of female academic staff was up to 45.3%, unsurprisingly female representation declined at senior

management levels as only 27.5% of managers were women. While the first female Vice-Chancellor Dame Lillian Penson was appointed in the UK in 1948 to the University of London, by 2017 only 21% of heads of Institutions were women. The appointment of Professor Louise Richardson as the first woman Vice Chancellor of Oxford in 2016 was hailed as a 'momentous event', to which the new incoming VC replied: "I look forward to the day when a woman being appointed isn't in itself news. Unfortunately, academia like most professions is pyramid-shaped – the higher up you go the fewer women are" (The Irish Times, 2016).

Internationally, O' Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald (2020) note that:

"Higher educational organisations across the EU and, indeed globally remain male dominated... the fact that men occupy 86% of all positions of Rector/President/Vice Chancellor and 76% of all positions, illustrates the way in which these organisations were designed by men for men".

(O' Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020, pp. 131)

Leisyte & Hosch-Dayican (2017, p. 95) note that in the EU, and in Dutch Universities in particular, where female academics are already a disadvantaged group, the widespread adoption of new-managerialism will further fuel the divide. Similar is reported by Goastellec & Vaira (2017, p. 173) in terms of the status of female academics in Switzerland and Italy as being lesser than their male counterparts. Black, Crimmins and Henderson (2019, p. 532) work collectively to try to break open the "hegemonic spaces of the academy" while MacLeod (2016, p. 134) in Black and Garvis' collected voices of women's lived experiences of academia in Australia, describes her journey as a research student as working to overcome an "androcentric, institutional false consciousness".

Changes are happening in Ireland however. Senior appointments have begun to be made in the area of Equality and Diversity (Vice Presidential appointments in NUIG in 2015 and Dublin Institute of Technology, now part of TU Dublin, in 2018). Research funding in the HE sector will henceforth be linked to reaching gender equality and diversity targets such as

those embedded in the Athena Swan²⁰ initiative (HEA, 2016) and the recent actioning of proposals for the creation of gender specific, women-only senior academic positions across the HE sector (HEA, 2018). Actions such as these however, while outwardly suggesting a sudden enlightenment regarding gender inequality in the HE landscape, are considered by Harford (2018b) for example to be driven by the post-recession critical funding shortages that have simply necessitated a re-modelling and reinvention of the HE sector (as discussed above in section 2.1.1).

In 2018, Harford had also observed that we were still not anywhere close to gender equality in the sector with not one single female President or Provost since the first University was established in Ireland over 426 years prior. However, in July 2020, Professor Kerstin Mey (O'Brien, 2020) was appointed as the first female President of the University of Limerick. This was followed in December 2020 by the appointment of Professor Maggie Cusack as President of the newly-founded Munster Technological University and in February 2021, Eeva Leinonen, previously Vice-Chancellor of Australia's Murdoch University, was confirmed as President of Maynooth University. Finally, on 10th April, 2021, Professor Linda Doyle was announced as the first female Provost of Trinity College Dublin, chosen from an exclusively female short-list of three candidates (Grove, 2021). It must also be stated that women are making their way into middle management (SL2 or Head of Department grade) in the IoT sector (Meagher, unpublished Phd) in particular in recent years. However, it is still the case in the most recently available data, that while 45% of all lecturers across all HEI's in Ireland are female, representation falls off dramatically in the more senior grades, with women making up only 28% of the 'most senior academic grades' (HEA, 2019, p.6). The message to female academics, according to Professor Linda Connolly of Maynooth University, would still appear to be to "curb your aspirations and find your place on the

²⁰ The Athena SWAN charter is an internationally recognised framework that was initially designed to encourage and support women's careers in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine) but which now also includes AHSSBL (arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law) as well as PMSS (professional, managerial and support roles). It was launched in Ireland in 2015. The Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards are used to recognise and measure a particular HEI's commitment to advancing these goals. (www.heai.ie).

middle rung of the ladder” (Connolly, 2017), and that is where it appears that the majority of us reside.

2.23 The Impact of the ‘New Managerialism’ on Women in HE

“Research on gender and higher education is resounding in its assessment that women represent a minority in the senior echelons of the academy.... This marginalisation is accentuated by a culture of managerialism which can provide opportunities for a minority of women, but which often serves overall to preserve and even deepen the gendered organisational culture of the academy”.

(Harford, 2020, p. 1)

As discussed above in section 2.14, ‘new managerialism’ as a model of public sector management has been fully adopted by HE in Ireland and is premised on the imposition of organisational management practices and cultural values more commonly associated with the corporate world (Peters, 2013). As Harford (2020) notes it has been widely accepted that the marginalisation that women experience in higher education in particular has been exacerbated by the cultural shift from the traditional collegiate system to managerialism, despite the fact that the latter was in fact “overwhelmingly male” in character and served to sustain gender inequality in universities (Clark, cited in O’ Connor, 2014, p. 38). ‘New managerialism’ may offer the illusion of gender neutrality (Lynch, 2010, p. 56), but in fact it has served to entrench and cement the “gendered character of university power relations” (Lafferty and Fleming, cited in O’ Connor, 2014, p. 39). The increased division of labour can lead to intensification of already existing inequalities (Leisyte & Hosch-Dayican, 2017, p. 103) and “potentially may re-enforce gendered structures, culture and practices”.

The impacts of ‘new-managerialism’ in HE on women could be summarised as follows, as evidenced in the literature:

1. Sustained government policy on the primacy of traditionally male disciplines (STEM), the primacy of research over teaching and, O’ Connor (2014, p. 96) adds, the scientisation of the research agenda, together act to marginalise women further. O’

Connor considers the financial subsidising of research by undergraduate teaching to be a gendered transfer of resources within the system acting to disadvantage women further.

2. Managerialism forefronts the low-profile, administrative tasks which are carried out by women in academia, often referred to as the organisational housekeeping (Harford, 2018; O' Connor, 2014, p. 39; Fitzgerald, 2009), the demand for which is driven by the culture of accountability and audit logic.
3. Managerialism also makes explicit the low-status caring roles carried out by women. According to Harford (2020), it takes advantage of women's "desire to fulfil their duty of care" to their students, and more pastoral tasks are thus devolved to women. Female academics perform a disproportionate amount of care work and "emotional labour" (Eggins, 2017, p. 117). Lynch et al. (2020) specifically refers to the "anti-care" ethic of capitalism which has been exacerbated by the drive for commercialisation and privatisation.
4. The expectations for more administrative and care duties (Lynch et al. 2020; Lynch, 2010) means that women academics experience imbalanced workloads within the system and this impacts on their career progression. This systematic devaluing of women's contribution and the over-burdening of workloads with low-status work means that there is less time for investment in higher status tasks such as research, publications and self-promotional activities (Harford, 2020; O'Connor, 2014, p. 98). Marginalised groups (Eggins, 2017, p. 95) tend not to have the capacity or opportunity to engage in high-profile activities.
5. Henkel (2017) examines the situation in the UK, where there is very good data on how the introduction of NPM has affected female career patterns. With the abolition of tenure, short-term, fixed-term and specified contracts became the norm within the sector. This resulted in increased expectations for securing a more long-term position, such that the aspiring academic has to have a record of successful research funding applications, a strong track record of publications both before and after the Phd, as well as demonstrable teaching experience (Henkel, 2017, p. 199).

Female academics are significantly disadvantaged because of what Henkel refers to as “temporal implications” as this period in a woman’s life can be dominated by child-bearing and care responsibilities.

6. Care responsibilities of both aspiring female academics or those in managerial or leadership roles warrants a level of commitment to the organisation such that these women need to craft ‘elastic’ or ‘careless’ selves to fit the demands into already stretched lives. In particular, Grummell, Devine and Lynch (2009) refer to the existence of a “care” ceiling in senior management grades in education, derived from women’s caring responsibilities in the home and the need to “juggle” between domestic and career responsibilities (Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen 2008, p. 3). This existence of this ‘care ceiling’ is built on the strong moral imperative for women to be primary carers (Lynch et al., 2020; Grummell, Devine and Lynch 2009; Noddings, 1984). This imperative is applied only to women and the “care” ceiling is thus “firmly fixed over their heads and reinforced at the base with concrete floors and walls of gendered ‘care-free’ expectations as to who is the ideal senior manager” (Grummell, Devine and Lynch 2009, p. 204). Successful promotion to senior management is predicated on the assumption that such domestic and ‘care’ responsibilities will take place in private and will not “encroach” (Lynch, Grummell and Devine 2012, p. 200) on the ‘public’ world or “pervasive masculinist” (Harford, 2018) culture of senior HE management:

“those who hold senior managerial posts are subjected increasingly to disciplinary rationalities that largely preclude being a primary carer”.

(Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009, Abstract).

7. Managerialism reproduces the masculinist model of organisational culture, which dominates, subordinates and is incompatible with the feminine (O’ Connor, 2014, p. 39). It valorises competitive, aggressive, individualistic behaviours and maps more closely to stereotypical hegemonical masculinist behaviours. This is explored in

more depth in the next section but the gendered organisational culture in HE can have the effect of excluding women on a number of levels:

a) Barriers to advancement

- arising out of feelings of not being 'good enough' or a sense of a lack of entitlement (O' Connor, 2014, p. 98) premised on the gendered demands of meeting the increased expectations of aspiring academics (see above), the often unbalanced workloads and the implications of care responsibilities.
- the unwelcoming 'chilly climate' (O'Connor, 2014, p. 90; Huang, 2017, p. 157) of stereotypical male-dominated leadership can be off-putting for aspiring female academics and can induce a fear of applying.

b) The gendered organisational culture can induce gender-based role conflict for those women who succeed in their aspirations for leadership.

2.24 "Think Manager Think Male"²¹ – A Gendered Organisational Culture

"... a woman aspiring to managerial legitimacy must obligingly push through the glass ceiling... only to find herself at the beginning of many formidable challenges including the compunction to redefine herself..."

(Gasparini, 2018, p.19)

Connell's seminal research on masculinities (Connell, 2003) has contributed to our understanding of gender relations and gender inequity (Grosswirth Kachtan, 2019) in society. Connell proffered a theory of masculinity as an identifiable set of practices or behaviours such that an individual produces masculinity through the processes of enacting these behaviours and over time, it becomes embedded as an "organizing feature of society" (Schippers, 2007). Connell also posited a theory of multiple masculinities and developed a definition of hegemonic (or dominant) masculinity.

²¹ O' Connor, 2014, p. 109.

“Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women”.

(Connell, 2003, p. 77)

Connell’s (2003) model identifies the structure and nature of power relations between masculinities as underpinning the domination of women (Griffin, 2018). As such, patriarchy is not just a process by which women are subordinated in society by the category of ‘men’. Under patriarchy, gender domination is achieved by relationships between men and women that are in fact determined by the power relations between different masculinities (Griffin, 2018).

Connell (2003) states that at any given time, one form of masculinity may be “exalted” over another but

“nevertheless, hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power...”

(Connell, 2003, p. 77)

Hegemonic masculinity has been described as including such traits such as physicality, muscularity, aggression and heterosexuality (Heywood and Mac an Ghail, 2012) and as a consequence, it results in a form of masculinity which lays claim to the “highest status and exercise(s) the greatest influence and authority” (Heywood and Mac an Ghail, 2012, p. 578). Despite the non-essentialism of Connell’s theory of the plurality of masculinities and the recognition of the diversity of norms and behaviours associated with being male, Griffin (2018, p. 377) states that in the Anglophone world, this diversity has been denied and there is only one conception of masculinity and “to move away from it is to be labelled ‘unmanly’ or effeminate”. It has in fact become a culturally idealised form of masculinity according to Grosswirth Kachtan (2019) and is used to legitimise and maintain masculine domination of women (as well as other groups of men not displaying these specific behaviours).

Organisations are considered to be important sites for the construction of masculinities (Grosswirth Kachtan, 2019, p. 1491) and thus can provide a mechanism for understanding gender domination. Connell (2003, p. 77) conflated hegemonic masculinity with the “top levels of business, the military and government” as providing a “fairly convincing corporate display of masculinity”. In terms of organisational leadership, Koenig et al. (2011, p. 637) state that the hegemonic masculinity of the culturally-stereotypical leadership role is “a large effect that is robust across variation in many aspects of leaders’ social contexts”. This effect then poses problems for women aspiring to these roles because female stereotypes simply do not match the masculinist stereotypical expectations of leadership. There is a fundamental mismatch between female gender stereotypes and leader stereotypes (Arnold and Loughlin, 2019) which creates enormous challenges for women aspiring to leadership due to the “stickiness” of these stereotypes which are proving resistant to change.

Male domination in organisations has resulted in a “symbolically” masculine, competitive leadership culture, one in which it is difficult for women to be accepted (Billing, 2011, p. 301), unless they have managed to negotiate a “sharing” of domestic and caring responsibilities with their partners in their home environment, as the demands involved tend not to be family-friendly or “careless” (Lynch et al. 2020; Lynch, 2010; Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009). Billing (2011, p. 298 - 300) further states that managerial jobs can be seen as “more or less manly” and asks if women in management are perhaps victims of “the phantom of the male norm” which she defines as the accepted ‘congruence’ between men and managerial roles. Billing’s use of the term “phantom” suggests that these norms can be hidden in almost all organisations but Gasparini, citing Baudrillard (1994, in Gasparini, 2018) suggests that in many they are not hidden at all but are overt, particularly in the “commercialized and commoditized hyper-real existence” of the modern organisation, such as the neo-liberalist HEI, in which women must compete and “masquerade amid masculine stereotypes”. This aligns with Lynch, Grummell and Devine’s (2012, p. 105) notion of the gendered construction of identity in the HE new-managerialist environment in Ireland “and how this may be shaped, constrained and facilitated through

broader discourses related to new managerialism, market ideologies and the incorporation of an enterprise culture in education”.

In Harford’s (2018) study on the perspectives of women professors in the university system in Ireland, she found that the participants regarded their respective universities as organisations which operate according to a male definition of merit and male-dominated career pathways, which privilege the hiring and promotion of men over women by emphasise masculinist processes of validation, selection and mentoring and which disregard domestic ‘care’ responsibilities and undervalues women’s nurturing and empathic approaches in work (Lynch, 2010: Lynch et al. 2020). There is an acceptance that measurement of professorial success will be against the standards and norms set by men, which foster competitive and individualistic patterns of behaviour rather than collegiality and collaboration, and which leave female professors doing the academic ‘housework’ or the operational work that must get done but which can remain invisible or undervalued. There was also an expectation that they would behave in “motherly” ways, “evoking a gender of caring in their work” (Harford, 2018, p. 9), but with an almost complete absence within their professional milieu of any reference to their caring responsibilities outside. Koenig et al. (2011, p. 637) also addressed how female leaders should behave and found that they are expected to be “agentic to fulfil the leadership role but communal to fulfil the female gender role” and even if women fulfil the former effectively, they can in fact experience dislike and prejudice if they do not specifically fulfil the female communal role.

Gasparini (2018) considers whether women must put aside their own feminine qualities and exhibit male characteristics to succeed as leaders in the masculine atmosphere that “permeates” many organisations. Gasparini (2018) concludes that women attempting to ascend through managerial hierarchies can still frequently encounter glass ceilings jealously guarded by the phantom of the male norm, especially if they try to remain true to themselves as females “nurturing and empathizing in ways not fully understood nor appreciated by men”. To occupy senior or executive positions, they are still expected to exhibit leadership characteristics that are normally associated with male heteronormative stereotypes. Koenig et al. (2011, p. 637) conclude that despite some changes towards more

androgynous beliefs about leadership, women will continue to experience prejudice and challenges in their efforts to ascend to leadership because “men fit the cultural construals of leadership better than women do”.

However, both Gasparini (2018) and Arnold and Loughlin (2019) are hopeful that the achievement of a critical mass of women in leadership roles is a crucial first step in changing the stereotype of the leader. Gasparini (2018) contends that participatory, transformational and gender-neutral management will be required to achieve strategic success in the fast-evolving knowledge-economy of the 21st century more so than management associated with “traditional, vertically aligned structures”. He paints a picture of globalised knowledge economies in which female talent will be seen as a competitive advantage. Arnold and Loughlin (2019) suggest that the only way to challenge the perceived incongruence of women and leadership is to change the stereotypes. The real change needed is not how women change behaviour in leadership, but how they are perceived and valued in these roles. With good leadership increasingly being seen as requiring communal attributes, the leadership stereotype may become more feminine and more conducive to women aspiring to and being in such roles and for that to come about, “gender-neutral stereotypes of leadership need to be embedded into societal consciousness” (Arnold and Loughlin, 2019, p.13).

2.25 Section Summary

In this chapter thus far I have endeavoured to establish the context for my study on the lived experiences of women in academic management and leadership in HE in Ireland. I have described the socio-historical emergence of the binary system of HE in Ireland and the IoT's in particular, whose unique provenance in terms of governance and structure have implications for the lived experiences of women in these organisations. I have reviewed the disadvantage women and girls face in wider society and I have established the systematic disadvantage that women experience aspiring to, and succeeding in, management and

leadership roles in the male milieu of HE. I will now conclude this chapter setting out the context for my study by outlining the feminist lens of inquiry that I have adopted.

2.3 'Ain't I a Woman?' Adopting a Feminist Lens of Inquiry

"...reading and using theory is necessary to shake us out of the complacency of seeing/hearing/thinking/feeling as we always have, or might have, or will have".

(Jackson and Mazzei, 2018, p. 720)

Pascale (2011) states that scholarship demands "thoughtfulness" and "insight" into not only who or why we study, but the tools we use to do so. Otherwise, there is a danger of producing method-driven research that is technically proficient "but not responsible for the politics on which those techniques are premised". Kim (2016, p. 28) contends that theorising provides us with the language of explication and understanding and cannot be divorced from the practice of research – there does not exist an 'either-or' dichotomy. When employing both philosophical and theoretical frameworks to shape research designs, Kim (2016, p. 32) considers researchers to be engaging with theory on a *macro* level. In this section, I will outline what Kim (2016, p. 2) refers to as the "big T" theories or *macro* theories that have informed my research design (poststructural, feminist theory) and this will be followed in Chapter 3 by what she refers to as the *meso* theory, or the theory related to my selected methodology of narrative inquiry.

2.3.1 'Feminist Attachments'

Aston and Harris (2007, p. 3) in their edited collection of essays by practitioners and scholars in the field of feminist theatre and performance state that the contributors have "feminist attachments". They interpret this attribution to mean that they have an enduring attachment to certain ideals "as remaining important and necessary to improving the social and cultural welfare of women's lives". I too would consider myself to have had an 'enduring

attachment' to similar ideals for most of my adult life. Hamdan (2012, p. 588) speaks of her gendered being as an important aspect of her work, which in her case is predominantly autoethnographical. For her, gender is not an 'innocent' social category; it can play a powerful role in a life. It can open or close doors, it can serve to offer or limit opportunities, it can shut down or create expectations. Hamdan feels comfortable identifying as a feminist. Feminism for her is not about the choices women make per se but the freedom to have those choices in the first place. She recognises that she has lived within "gender-specific boundaries" - that the way she was raised, her schooling and her early socialisation all acted to emphasise her femaleness and thus her place as second to men (Hamdan, 2012, p. 596).

Similarly, my definition of feminism comes from my own social experience of it. I look back and see those 'gender-specific' boundaries in my own early socialisation and convent-schooling as a child with its limited aspirational outcomes (See Chapter 1, section 1.12). And since graduating in the late eighties, I have witnessed and/ or personally experienced problems with gender differentiation being used as a form of male domination (Reid, 2018; Kraus, 1993) in my various workplaces, including non-promotion, stalled careers, omissions from committees and the allocation of administrative and 'caring' tasks not expected of male colleagues in similar roles (Harford, 2018; O' Connor, 2014; Morley, 2014; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Kimmel, 2008; Nicholson, 1996).

I have never wavered from my understanding of contemporary feminism as a movement which has worked to equalize society by the establishment of freedom of choice for women, freedoms which my generation has been privileged to avail of, unlike my mother's and the generations before her (Beard, 2007). Feminism attempts to account for male domination and women's subordination in society. It is an ideology of dissent against the difficulties faced by women in their ordinary lives (Reid, 2018), the action of giving voice to the voiceless and power to the hitherto powerless; as such, it is both a reaction to, and product of, patriarchal culture (Nicholson, 1996, p.21). Under patriarchy, according to Reid (2018, p.13), structures act to "reproduce and reinforce the hierarchical relations between the sexes". Exposing and redressing inequality and the general invisibility (Reinharz and Chase, 2002) of women as social actors has been the primary accomplishment of feminism since

the 1970s (Reid, 2018). As a female researcher choosing to research women's lived experiences in a male dominated leadership role, while it would not necessarily position this study in the realm of feminist inquiry, the lens through which I have chosen to view these storied experiences is that of feminist analysis. As befits a qualitative researcher aspiring to 'dramatize the data' (Saldana, 2018), I see feminism and feminist research as primarily about "putting women in where they have been left out... keeping women on the stage rather than relegating them to the wings" (van Son, 2000 p.215-16).

2.3.2 A Political Movement

Moi (1990, p. 94) declares feminism to be a political movement, one which is subversive and marginal to the hegemonical patriarchal order in society. The onus is on the subversive in society to be more self-reflective than those in the dominant order, she observes. As such, feminist thinkers and writers need to learn to work with and use theory as a political tool. "Theory matters politically" (Moi, 1990, p. 97), she intones. Similarly, Lather (1992) states that feminist research is occupied with the politics of the ways of knowing and of being known. As a body of research, it argues for the centrality of gender as the basic organising principle in the shaping of not just the material conditions of our lives but our deepest unconscious as well as the distribution of power and privilege in the societies in which we live. The task therefore of feminist research is to generate and refine more engaged and contextualised methodologies from which new knowledge claims can emerge out of struggle and oppression (Lather, 1991). Jackson and Mazzei (2012, p. v.iii) hold that the process of knowledge generation relies on our engagement with theory such that "thinking with theory" can open up and propagate rather than foreclose lines of thought and informed argument.

I think it is important to acknowledge the seminal work of the liberal feminist tradition which brought about the freedoms that my generation of women are enjoying today, most importantly of which must be women's suffrage. Liberal feminism sought to secure equality

of opportunity for the sexes and the twin issues of sex discrimination and sex stereotyping emerging from the processes of differentials in the socialisation of gender identities (Kim, 2016). Sex discrimination and sex stereotyping serve to limit life opportunities for women and girls and result in unequal opportunities and disadvantage across the lifespan from birth. Through the naming of such differences and inequalities, and the gathering of documentary evidence, liberal feminists continue to work to address gender inequality and alter social practices and social thinking on the issue.

Theory is intended to provide the language for explication so that we can reach and articulate new knowledge and understanding. Liberal feminism does not go far enough in this sense as it does not address the fundamental 'why' of the issue of gender inequality, and in particular the unequal social relationships between men and women across all facets of human life, in both the private and the public sphere. It does not explain the continued twin dominance of male power and privilege that "work together and that cause the constraints and suffering that many women experience at home, in the workplace and in society" (Kim, 2016, p. 50).

2.3.3 Critical Feminist Theory

Many feminist scholars have looked to develop a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of gender inequality (Pascale, 2011). Critical feminist theory aims to fill in these gaps in our understanding. An intersection of critical theory and feminist theory, it is concerned with "the production and reproduction of gender privilege under the system of patriarchy" (Kim 2016, p. 50). Critical theory examines issues of power and domination in society, seeking to disrupt and challenge the status quo. Critical theory fell into disfavour with postmodernists, poststructuralists and feminists alike, primarily but not exclusively because of its academic distance from the lived experiences of the oppressed it professed to study. For feminists, it was also the almost exclusive arena of predominantly white male academics, who tended to overlook and disregard gender oppression. In the 'post' era of

the late twentieth century and the new millennium, a reconceptualised critical theory began to emerge. Poststructural theorists such as Foucault (Foucault, 1994; Foucault, 1980; Barker, 1998) and Butler (1993, 1999) began to move away from the notion of theory as a determinant for how society *should* work towards theory as a guide or *map* to new and emerging social movements, taking account of issues of race, sexuality, religion, and intersectionality while striving to open up gaps in dominant discourses rather than foreclose them.

Critical feminist theory can be said to divide into two parallel approaches – one focusing on how society functions to reproduce male power and privilege while the other examines the practices of resistances to such male hegemonic power (Kim, 2016). In truth, an interrogation of one without the other could be said to be somewhat incomplete as Foucault (Foucault, 1994; Foucault, 1980; Barker, 1998) holds that power and resistance are intricately connected. In the context of the sociology of schooling for example, Giroux (1983, p. 259) considers reproduction theorists to pay insufficient attention to human agency and he highlights how human agents can “come together within specific historical and social contexts in order to both make and reproduce the conditions of their existence”. He observes that human subjects can often disappear within a theory which “leaves no room for moments of self-creation, mediation and resistance”. To leave unexamined the human as agentic being, with the ability to make meaning and bring about change, is to tell only half the story. Hence the emergence of feminist resistance theory, a poststructuralist turn which seeks to examine women and girls’ lived experiences as agentic beings, who *act* as well as who are *acted upon*.

2.3.4 A Foucauldian Perspective

Poststructuralists adhere to the principle that there is no fixed underlying structure that orders meaning and hence is neither arbitrary nor fixed but instead represents a shifting, non-static and fluid production of meaning, irrespective of whether this refers to language

or various facets of human social, political or cultural life. By adopting the stance that meaning is constantly shifting and inherently fragmented and unstable, prominent poststructuralist thinkers such as Foucault perceive the need for the contextualisation and social construction of meaning. Furthermore, from this notion of meaning as unstable and fragmented emerges the notion that power is not a singularity but is in fact a multiplicity. Power is not disconnected from language; it is constituted through the process of linguistic differentiation, which poststructural feminism holds is not a neutral mechanism. Power is therefore not a 'something' one possesses but it is intrinsic and immanent in all human action, interaction and social relations (Foucault, 1994; Foucault, 1980; Tamboukou, 2013; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012; Barker, 1998).

Moi (1990, p. 99) claims that feminism has shown up what the consequences of powerlessness and marginalisation have been but has not engaged sufficiently with what we understand by power and what she terms the *creative* potential in it. She states that feminism needs to understand power differently, to reconceptualize it to avoid simply replicating the normative, patriarchal conceptions of power which have such negative consequences for so many. Foucault (Barker 1998, p.25) theorised that there is an implicit conjunction between power and knowledge – they are not the same but each results in the production of the other. Knowledge and power are therefore intimately and *productively* related. Foucault's productive model of power was in direct opposition to the prevailing negative conceptions which categorised the operation of power in society as opposing and blocking, manifesting as censorship, exclusion and repression. Foucault's point was that these are the *effects* of power being conceived of as negative rather than essential features of power itself. Furthermore, power therefore cannot be divorced from knowledge because "power produces both objects of knowledge and the subject to which a particular knowledge / object relates. Therefore it is the exercise of power that brings about the emergence of objects of knowledge, bodies of transformation and the possible subjects that constitute themselves around them" (Barker 1998, p. 27).

Foucault's conception of power was nominalistic, that is, non-observable and intangible. Power is not a thing or an institution, nor something we can be endowed or gifted with.

Neither is it an entity that can be possessed and passed down from those who have it to those who do not but rather Foucault conceives power as a 'net-like' set of strategic relations of force. An effective examination of power therefore looks at the *effects* it produces by analysing these series of 'net-like' relations as it *circulates* between bodies. We are all both subjects and objects of power with the possibility of exercising it "even as we experience its effects" (Barker, 1998, p. 28). We are both at once subjects and subjugated. An analysis of power is therefore an analysis of the strategies and tactics by which power is exercised; it is an examination of how subjects represent themselves as a consequence of that circulation, an examination of the way power *modifies* human actions. Power thus exists only as it is exercised by some on others (Foucault, 1994). It is therefore a fundamentally relational structure that induces and engages the 'other' in the possibilities of both collusion and resistance. The power relationship inherently implies the possibility of resistance and therefore a "strategy of struggle" (Foucault, 1994, p. 346). Conflict and resolution take place within systems of asymmetrical power relations (Giroux, 1983, p. 260) that favour the dominant, but there are always "complex and creative fields of resistance". There are always the possibilities of resistance and Foucault held that things are always liable to change, alternatives are always possible. The action of the power relationship is fundamentally one of reciprocity between consent, or acquiescence, and struggle. Both consent and struggle are inherent to and not outside of power – we can thus never be outside of power and power relations.

Furthermore, power relations are embedded in the social fabric; they are interwoven with other kinds of relations such as those of family, economic and material relations, as well as sexual relations. Foucault refers to it as being deeply rooted in the social nexus and not some kind of ancillary overarching structure "over and above" society (Foucault, 1994, p. 343). Power is everywhere and to live in society is to live in situations where power is continually circulating and being exercised by and upon subjects. A society without power relations simply cannot be because it would be an abstraction and not real. Foucault attests that we should concentrate our attention on those struggles against domination which appear to be globalised but which are in fact 'transversal' as they "reach into the very grain

of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives ... within the social body rather than from above it” (Foucault, 1980, p. 199).

The struggle of women against male domination is one such ‘transversal’ struggle (Barker, 1998). Foucault however did not create a template to analyse and understand power/knowledge in specific settings. He did not intend his work to be prescriptive, but rather instrumental – like a toolkit for thinking through notions of power relations and meanings of truth and knowledge in a myriad of social settings (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 55). A Foucauldian analysis resists the temptation to make long-term definitive assertions and pronouncements, and refuses to speak for others, but instead creates spaces, openings, gaps in dominant discourses whereby different groups may be able to create new strategies or tactics to reconceive power and power relations in their immediate environment (Barker, 1998, p.32).

The application of Foucault’s theories of power to explain gendered power relations has been the subject of some criticism, as along with Lacan and Derrida, such heteronormative theorists have been perceived by some as “blind” to women’s experiences (Radtke and Stam, 1994, p. 5). They are considered to have adopted a universalist, masculine position on power. Foucault in particular was considered to be ambivalent to the uniqueness of male-female power relations (Radtke and Stam, 1994, p. 6), While he does not deny the systematic privileging of the male over the female, he does not attribute such privilege to the sexual identity that belongs to woman (Beasley, 1994, p.94). According to Grierson (2019, p. 734), whilst Foucault may have had little to say about women and gender, his contribution was to offer a methodology for a feminist examination into the kinds of conditions that constitute knowledge, who could produce valid knowledge and under what terms.

I have adopted a Foucauldian approach to the interpretation and analyses of the participant narratives. Such an approach could be summarised as one which questions *how* power *affects* the subject, not what it is or how it is acquired (Kim, 2016) and which examines *how*

power is *exercised in action* rather than by and on whom (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). A Foucauldian approach views the subject as an entity that can both act and be acted upon, that can be both subject and subjugated - the subject can shift and respond to changing circumstances and conditions and exert power over the other even as power is exerted over it. Finally, a Foucauldian approach acknowledges that power and knowledge are intimately and productively connected, each resulting in the production of the other. As Jackson & Mazzei (2012, p. 65) state, they are constantly articulating one another in the actions of people. Foucauldian power involves knowledge that is located “deep within regimes of discourses and practices” and can as a consequence lend legitimacy to certain knowledges and “regimes of truth” such that a lack of perceived ‘legitimate’ knowledge can have the effect or appearance of disempowerment of the subject.

2.3.5 Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice

Bourdieu’s theory of practice can also provide a frame for understanding and analysing power and the additional challenges faced by women in academia for example, given its ability to accommodate a focus on both organisational dynamics of domination as well as the reproduction of dominance through practice (McDonough and Polzer, 2012). And whilst Foucault sees power as nominalistic, beyond the confines of structure or individual agency, Bourdieu sees it as both “structurally and culturally created, and constantly re-legitimised through an interplay of agency and structure” (Leon, 2010).

In Bourdieu’s construction, organisations can be considered as a field, or a space of objective positionings occupied by members who possess varying amounts of capital, or the different forms of power held by members. In discussing capital accumulation with respect to organisational behaviour, Gander (2019) holds that economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital are relevant. The first of these is the most obvious and equates to salary status, assets and general financial standing. Social capital pertains to group membership, social connections and the status attached to various relationships within the organisation.

Symbolic capital can be conceived of as a set of values which are deemed to be superior to others and therefore confer social or career advantage in the field. Finally, cultural capital is developed by exposure to organisations or fields over time and is converted into dispositions or acts, and as such is a physical embodiment of a social habitus.

Bourdieu defines habitus as follows:

“The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment (eg. the material conditions of existence characteristic of a class condition) produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures”.

(Bourdieu, 1977, p. 70)

Organisations are culturally structured spaces, such that members’ practices can challenge established positionings within those structures, and these practices are generated or informed by habitus, which can be conceived of as a system of underlying dispositions or cultural ‘know-how’. Bourdieu (1977, p, 73) further conceptualises habitus as a “series of moves” which are strategically organised without themselves being the “product” of a genuine intention. Habitus therefore develops *in response* to a culturally constructed field, allowing individuals “variously positioned” (McDonough and Polzer, 2012, p. 362) within that field to get a sense of what is in effect possible, or not as the case may be, thereby acting as an enabler for a framework of practice for agents situated in the field.

When considering the intersection of gender, field and habitus, Thorpe (2009, p. 497) contends that Bourdieu did not consider fully the implications of the concept of field in his work on gender. However, gender has been conceptualised not as a field in and of itself, but rather it becomes part of different forms of fields in ways specific to each field (Krais (2006, p. 128). All fields operate a system of gender rules, some of which are common, whilst others are specific to particular fields (Chambers, cited in Thorpe, 2009, p. 497). The field of HE in Ireland as it transitions towards the entrepreneurial model of governance and new managerialism under the neo-liberalist agenda could be said to operate a system of gender rules, for which the process of capitals accumulation which impacts on career

progression in the sector, acts to impede women moreso than men, thus contributing to the reproduction of a male-dominated senior management HE (Gander, 2019).

2.3.6 The Social Construction of Gender

Postmodern, poststructuralist thinking as applied to feminism draws on notions of plurality, destabilisation and non-foundational truth to the extent that some adherents such as Butler propose that a universalising and normalising account of women as a homogenous group should be questioned or 'troubled'. Such universalising principles are considered to be deeply connected to domination and subordination and the hegemonic male standard and could in fact result in a feminism that is in itself a form of 'domination'. By employing an all-encompassing and unproblematic categorisation of 'woman' feminism could inadvertently be acting to re-enforce the oppression that the movement is in fact working to overthrow (Butler, 1999; Beasley, 1994). Butler (1993, 1999) is particularly troubled by the destabilising unitary notion of identity and argues against any notion of identity categorisation, while others, with whom I identify, consider the adoption of her stance as challenging. To succeed in resisting male hegemonic power there needs to be some basic organising principle or categorisation of sexual identity from which to launch such a resistance. Butler herself acknowledges that for the most part feminism has in fact assumed some existing category of 'woman' which constitutes the "subject for whom political representation is pursued" (Butler, 1999, p.3).

Poststructuralists such as Foucault reject the notion of a central, stable identity, viewing it as repressive. Butler is considered to be a Foucauldian feminist in this regard who also argues against the existence of a stable subject of feminism - she posits that there can be no such thing as a "seamless category of 'women'" (Butler, 1999, p. 33). However, Butler's (1999) poststructuralism is tempered somewhat as she does not foresee what she terms the 'death' of the autobiographical or a Foucauldian abandonment of the 'I'. Rather she draws attention to the inability of the 'I' to express itself outside of the language that is

available to it, what she terms the grammar that “governs” it, which she holds is laid down by oppression and subordination. Butler refers to this as the “bind of self-expression”.

“I am not outside of the grammar that governs me. I am not outside the language that structures me. I am not determined by the language that makes the ‘I’ possible”.

(Butler, 1999, xxiv)

To invoke a unitary notion of ‘woman’ is according to Butler (1999., p. 9) inherently problematic because a split or separation is introduced in the feminine subject by the very distinction between gender and sex. No matter what biological accountability or authority the category of ‘sex’ may have, gender is socially constructed because “gender is performatively constituted by its very expression” (Butler in Beasley, 1994); there can be no gender identity outside of the expression of gender itself. Normative gender presumptions are made based on what Butler refers to as cultural perceptions of what one sees (Butler, 1999, p.xxiii). Performativity of one’s gender is a repetitive, iterative combination of linguistic and bodily acts that are interpreted through the lens of normative gender presumptions. Performativity therefore “achieves it affects through its naturalization in the context of a body understood” through the lens of culturally sustained and normative presumptions. The performance of gender is then the repeated stylisation of the body within the confines of what Butler refers to as a “rigid regulatory frame” that “congeal” over time (Butler 1999, p. 43) into our normalised notions of sexual categories:

“... what we take as an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts posited through the gendered stylisation of the body”.

(Butler 1999, p. xv).

For me, Butler harks back here to de Beauvoir’s claim that one “is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (de Beauvoir, 2009, p. 293) and suggests that the term ‘woman’ is itself one in process; it is never possible to finally become a ‘woman’ for it is in itself a “becoming”; an ongoing, iterative process of construction that does not have a beginning or an end. It is continually open to construction and ‘re’-construction through normative

discursive practice and inculturation. De Beauvoir describes the process of sexual specification that take place at puberty in more allegorical terms:

“If well before puberty and sometimes even starting from early childhood she already appears sexually specified, it is not because mysterious instincts immediately destine her to passivity, coquetry or motherhood but because the intervention of others in the infant’s life is almost originary, and her vocation is imperiously breathed into her from the first years of her life”.

(de Beauvoir, 2009, p. 293)

De Beauvoir thus establishes that the girl’s lot in life is very different as “she does not have a sex” (de Beauvoir, 2009, p. 297). As a child, she does not necessarily experience this absence as a lack, but from thereon, the female child experiences the world differently from the boy, and that experience of difference can transform into inferiority over time. De Beauvoir rejects the notion of an internal ‘biological’ female nature and posits that femaleness is socially constructed and it is always construed as the negative; she is ‘less than’, a ‘deficit’ or ‘lack’. The feminine is subordinate to the masculine, which is deemed to be the standard, the reference point. Humanity is male and woman is defined by him in relation to himself, not in relation to herself (de Beauvoir, 2009, p. 6). Only the feminine ‘gender’ is marked – the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated as one and are therefore not in need of marking or signification. Her body is understood only as lack or absence. She is the ‘other’, the ‘object’ to his ‘subject’; she is the myth of woman or the ‘second sex’;

“... she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject, the Absolute. She is the Other”.

(de Beauvoir, 2009, p. 7)

Phelan (1993, p. 5) also posited that the signifying body is ‘marked’ by its social, sexual and political readings in a male hegemonic universe such that the ‘unmarked’ body is that of the male – he is the norm and therefore “unremarkable”; it is the female whom the male marks.

Only men are 'persons' or 'subject' and there is no gender but the 'feminine' (Butler, 1999, p. 26) as the masculine is not the masculine per se, but the general. De Beauvoir argues that this categorisation of woman by the bodily signification of 'sex' amounts to a refusal to grant her autonomy and freedom as it is experienced by men. The female body instead of being her salvation and an instrument of her own freedom is in fact a limiting signification of her oppression – her body is marked within social (masculine) discourse while the male body remains unmarked, forever conflated with the universalising norms of 'personhood.'

Butler acknowledges that gender as a social construct is a factor of analyses that is applied to real and "embodied persons", as a mark or signification of "biological, linguistic and/or cultural differences" (Butler, 1999, p. 13). and views femininity as a fundamental signification of 'lack', signified poststructurally by a set of "differentiating linguistic rules that effectively create sexual difference" (Butler, 1999, p. 37). Furthermore, the poststructuralist understanding that meaning is constructed through a system of linguistic differentiation cannot be divorced from power. As socially constructed embodied subjects, we are shaped by power, in the form of the dominant social and political hierarchy from which the 'grammar' that defines our identity has evolved. The meaning given to identity is socially and culturally constructed, through mechanisms of linguistic differentiation that are not neutral or innocent but strongly imbued with a male bias. For Butler, it is simply not enough to ask how 'woman' might become better and more fully represented in language and politics without understanding how the category of 'woman' is socially constructed; produced and reproduced by "the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought" (Butler, 1999, p. 5).

This construction of femaleness as negative is a social construction, according to both de Beauvoir (2009) and Butler (1993, 1999). Within the gendered organisational leadership culture of HE (see section 2.2) the feminine is 'othered', subordinate to the masculine, which is deemed to be the norm and against which as managers and leaders our actions and behaviours are measured. We exist only in reference to the dominant elite (Spivak in Landry and Maclean, 1996, p. 212) and our resistance is only perceived by its effect on this elite. In the critical framework I have adopted, the theoretical work of Butler (1993, 1999)

and de Beauvoir (2009) is supported primarily by Hustvedt (2016), Walters (2011), Nicholson (1996) and Rowbotham (1973).

2.3.7 On Care, Caring and Connectedness

“Because housework alone is compatible with the duties of motherhood, she is condemned to domestic labour which locks her into repetition and immanence; day after day it repeats itself, in identical form from century to century; it produces nothing new”.

(de Beauvoir, 2009, p. 495)

Feminine caring, along with the biological imperative, has resulted in woman being the predominant ‘carer’ in most civil, patriarchal societies which has created an almost unbreakable bind of the feminine with motherhood and the domestic sphere (Lynch et al., 2020; Lynch, 2010; Bowden and Mummery, 2014; Walters, 2011; Nicholson, 1996). It would be impossible therefore to discuss the lived experiences of women career managers in HE without paying close attention to the notions of ‘care’ and ‘caring’, which according to Nodding’s (1986) seminal text are inextricably linked.

The notion of ‘caring’ and the relationship between women and nurturing is very prevalent in the literature in terms of how women in HE management and leadership roles engage with staff and are expected to engage in a male dominated management milieu (Arnold and Loughlin, 2019; Gasparini, 2018; Morley, 2013; Billing, 2011). Noddings (1986) theorised that women define themselves in terms of caring. They approach moral problems from the perspective of the ‘one-caring’ (Noddings, 1986, p. 16), by which she means that women in their human desire to ‘care’ do so by taking on the other’s reality and are compelled to act on behalf of the other. Caring as the ‘one-caring’ is characterised by Noddings as a move away from ‘self’ towards an engrossment with the other or the ‘cared-for’. Noddings’ theorising focuses on this concept of engrossment with the other, which she defines as a form of ‘motivational displacement’ or shift (Noddings, 1986, p. 33) of one’s motive energy away from the self. Caring as the ‘one-caring’ involves a ‘feeling with’ the other and is not

akin to the notion of 'empathy' which she views as a Western, rational and masculine concept. Empathy is defined as the projection of one's own personality to bring about understanding of the other, whereas Noddings (1986) claims that 'feeling with' is about receptivity and the action of receiving. As the 'one-caring' I am not trying to find out how it feels to be in the shoes of an 'other' but rather:

"I receive the other into myself - I see and feel with the other. I become a duality... The seeing and feeling are mine but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me".

(Noddings, 1986, p. 30).

Caring as the 'one-caring', as a 'feeling with' rather than empathising, involves communicating and connecting with the other. In this mode, we do not respond immediately by analysing and formulating a plan to resolve the problem; we begin by simply sharing a feeling (Noddings, 1986, p. 31). Such receptivity is honest, open and generous. It is both reflexive and reflective – I can receive others and in so doing, I receive myself and can reflect on that which I have already received (Noddings, 1986, p. 35).

Noddings theories of caring as the 'one-caring' are concerned with both maintaining and enhancing care. According to Noddings, woman's capacity to care and her desire to define herself by that capacity are part of the feminine desire for an attainable moral ideal – she opens herself up to receive and to be received. It is both generous and risky as her vulnerability is increased when she cares. Her capacity to care has nothing to do with abstraction, a moving away from the concrete situation towards abstract problem solving. To care as the 'one-caring' she remains in the situation, in full awareness, as a sensitive, receptive moral agent. Noddings (1986) further argues that feminine caring, as a deeply human and receptive action and in communication with, and response to, an 'other', is in fact "the foundation of – and not a mere manifestation of – her morality" and can form a "sound and lovely alternative foundation for ethical behaviour" (Noddings, 1986, p. 42).

Noddings' claim that women prefer to approach problems as concrete and profoundly human problems "to be lived and to be solved in living" (Noddings, 1986, p. 96) aligns with an epistemology of lived experience. Furthermore, she views her theories not as a

definitive set of knowledge claims but simply as a way to *see things differently*, in alignment with a postmodern/ poststructuralist worldview. I contend that in alignment with Butler's non-essentialist concept of 'woman', Noddings's feminine ethic of caring does not necessarily imply that it is attributable to all women, nor does it seek to exclude. Rather, "a different sort of world could be built on the natural caring so familiar to women" (Noddings, 1986, p. 46). The ethics and morality of caring as the 'one-caring' is therefore an alternative, an invitation to "participate" in the feminine as she conceives it (Noddings, 1986, p. 44).

Contemporaneously, Gilligan's seminal (1982, 1993) theory of an ethic of care fundamentally questioned the manner "in which men's experience stands for all of human experience" in traditional moral theorising and in particular, she asked questions of those "theories which eclipse the lives of women and shut out women's voices" (1993, p. xiii). So where Noddings' work led to an ethic where we could *see differently*, Gilligan's work led her to identify an ethic which was based on listening for and hearing "*a different voice*", one in which the 'self' was not separate or disparate from relationship or emotion (Gilligan, 2011), both traditionally associated with the feminine and viewed as being antithetical to reason and rational thinking:

"The ethic of care starts from the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings and the human condition is one of connectedness and interdependence".

(Gilligan, 2011)

Gilligan (Gilligan and Goldberg, 2000, p. 702) further claims that women have been traditionally either "unable or unwilling" to express their feelings because when they emphasised relationships and caring over "logic and justice", they opened themselves up to being accused of moral inferiority. She continues by suggesting that the issue has really been one of "absence versus presence", strongly echoing the work of de Beauvoir. According to Gilligan, women's morality has been unfairly conflated with absence in the sense of being 'selfless'. Gilligan (1993, p. xiii) fundamentally questioned why men can speak of themselves as if they are not living in connection with women, "as if women were

not in some sense part of themselves”, whilst women speak of themselves as if they were selfless, disconnected and without a voice;

“Women’s discovery that to be selfless means not to be in relationship is revolutionary because it challenges the disconnection from women and the dissociation within women that maintain and are maintained by patriarchy and civilization”.

(Gilligan, 1982, p. xiii)

By remaining disconnected from emotion and feeling women continue to uphold patriarchal moralising and by taking their cues from the dominant culture “how could they be responsible for what they “decided” and how could they feel mature” (Gilligan and Goldberg, 2000, p. 702). An ethic of care therefore is a perspective which values relationship, intimacy, caring for others and connection, over a traditionally masculine perspective which values autonomy, objectivity and disconnection from others. Likewise, Noddings (2013) argues for a morality of care that focuses on the needs of those being ‘cared for’, justifying interpersonal relationships and connectedness over distant and abstract connections, which she sees as an explicitly feminine and feminist ethic.

The ethic of care has been questioned as to its alignment with the feminist agenda for dismantling systemic and institutionalised patriarchy, given the complex history of femininity and caregiving “shaped in contexts of oppression” (Norlock, 2019, p. 10). But Gilligan (1993, p. 49) citing Miller (1976) looks to the efficacy of women’s sense of self being shaped around the need to maintain relationships, which could result in a new language that would separate “the description of care and connection from the vocabulary of inequality and oppression”. According to Miller, this could lead to “more advanced, more affiliative” ways to live and be in the world with the potential for “a more creative and cooperative mode of life”, a way of seeing differently, which would be for the benefit of all. Gilligan’s (2011) ethic of care is founded therefore on the efficacy of relationship and connectedness, of everyone having a voice and that voice being heard and listened to “in their own right and on their own terms”. In that sense, and I think like Noddings (1986,

2013) above, it is an ethic which can overcome accusations of essentialism, with little to offer the “complex pluralism of many women’s voices” (Norlock, 2019, p. 10). It is an ethic that if viewed through a democratic rather than patriarchal lens as has been the case heretofore has much to offer, because as humans, “we are by nature empathic and responsive beings, hard-wired for cooperation” (Gilligan, 2011).

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have set out both the socio-political context of, and the theoretical framework for, this study on the lived experiences of women in management and leadership in HE in Ireland. My approach to the analysis and interpretation of the participant narratives is underpinned by the adoption of a poststructural, critical feminist lens and draws on the work of Foucault and Bourdieu to examine meanings of power and cultural capital within gendered organisations, Butler and de Beauvoir on feminine subjectivity, and the work of Noddings and Gilligan on the imperative for feminine ‘caring’ and the dilemma for women in HE of the ‘ethic of care’.

In the next chapter, I examine narrative inquiry as both methodology and method, I find my footing as an arts-based narrative inquirer and I work at bringing my own narrative voice to the fore.

Chapter 3 A Narrative Arts-Based Research Design – A Methodological Framework

3.1 Introduction

“The neglect of philosophical foundations in social research results in ontological assumptions that function as untheorized truths... Ontological assumptions are extremely powerful... because they shape what counts as valid knowledge”.

“Scholarship demands not only a thoughtfulness about who or what we study but also insight into the tools we use for conducting research...”

(Pascale, 2011, p.2-3)

Narrative inquiry as a research discipline has been accused of lacking in theoretical rigour and both Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 42) and Clandinin and Murphy (2009, p. 598) have called for narrative ways of thinking about phenomena to be situated within narrative research philosophical and methodological frameworks. Likewise, Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) have drawn attention to the fact that many narrative inquiries are not transparent enough about the philosophical and methodological frameworks that underpin them. Pascale (2011, p.1) critiques method-driven qualitative research undertaken without any consideration of their philosophical and theoretical foundations, an approach which she states has “profound implications for the production of knowledge” and has “truncated the ability of qualitative research methods to apprehend profound changes in social life and routine relations of power and privilege”.

Kim (2016) holds that theory is integral to the practice of research. It provides the foundations for the assumptions we make and the actions we take as researchers on our research journey. Likewise, given my background education in, and early career experiences with, positivistic scientific inquiry, I believe theory provides us with the language for exploration, for thinking and for intellectualising. It affords us a mechanism for not just *knowing* about the human condition but for the possibilities of *not knowing* - “we are not

only what we know but what we don't know" (Kim, 2016, p. 28). Kim further states that qualitative researchers and narrative inquirers in particular cannot just be technicians, possessing the skills and mechanics of the practice and conduct of research – we must also immerse ourselves in the "dilemmas, challenges, complexities, and puzzles" of the quest for human knowing and understanding (p. 31). We must therefore immerse ourselves in philosophy because we will necessarily have to challenge what we have "already known as truth... (and) become other than what we have been by interrogating ourselves". Theorising lived experiences means that narrative research must endeavour to link those experiences with a back catalogue of intellectual scholarship and practice.

In this chapter I focus on the methodological underpinnings of this research which affords me a means of unpacking my own learning journey or 'becoming' as an interpretive, qualitative researcher, adopting an ontological and epistemological positioning sufficient to ground my research on time spent meeting and speaking with just 6 women in the HE sector in Ireland. On this journey, I worked collaboratively with the participants to co-construct stories of our daily, lived experiences as women in the predominantly male-dominant world of HE management and leadership in the sector (O' Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; Harford, 2018). It has been a multi-layered and evolving storytelling experience. At its heart are the personal stories of the participants as they were co-constructed in their conversations with me, the researcher. Moving outwards towards the edges of the circle is the story of how I creatively worked with this multiplicity of storied lives to interpret, present and 're'-present these stories in literary art forms (poetic monologues, creative non-fiction) culminating in one composite and coherent telling in the form of a short ethnographic playscript of dramatic vignettes extracted from the data and developed for solo performance for the purposes of dissemination. An active agent in this outwards motion is necessarily my own story of 'becoming' as a qualitative researcher and narrative inquirer.

As befits a narrative inquiry, I present this review of the philosophical literature I have consulted with the assumption that it is another type of 'story' or 'fiction' that researchers construct for their readers. It is inherently "partial, privileged and rhetorically crafted"

(Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 82) and therefore can never be anything but incomplete. I contend that all research can only ever be selective - we cannot capture the “literal truth” in any meaningful way (Van Niekerk & Savin-Baden, 2010, p.29). It is not possible for a literature review to be anything *but* partial irrespective of the underlying ontological and epistemological stance of the researcher; choices to include or exclude, to cite or omit, are always made regardless of the stance taken. No story can tell it all as complete expression is unattainable according to the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1964). As such, a literature review needs to be read with caution, with a hint of suspicion (Goltz, 2011) and the expectation of omissions. Like Rowe (2003, p. 191) my research journey has been “emergent and improvised”. I have chosen to follow certain conversations in the literature that have helped me tease out the philosophical stance that I have adopted, the theorists with whom I have engaged, the methodological choices I have made and the methods I have employed as a consequence. Just as I have made creative choices to work the threads of the co-constructed stories of the participants into something new – an ethnographic playscript or ethnodrama (Saldana, 2005, 2011, 2018) - I have also followed certain threads and stories in the literature and ignored others, weaving a pattern for the story I want to tell. Like Eavan Boland in her poem ‘Patchwork’ (see Prologue) on this thesis journey I too have been working late into the night, my “back to the dark”, with my “trashbag” of scholarly texts, logging and cutting, stitching and patching, endeavouring to weave these story threads into coherent telling for the reader.

3.2 Qualitative Inquiry

Good research design within qualitative inquiry begins with the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research and an articulation of how theoretical and interpretive frameworks are used to shape it (Waring, 2012; Coe, 2012; Pascale, 2011; Creswell, 2009). Coe (2012) in particular states that it is impossible to do or understand research without having a clear understanding of one’s own and others’ stance on the fundamental philosophical issues of ontology, epistemology and axiology. According to Denzin and

Lincoln (2018, p. 19) all qualitative researchers are philosophers, guided by abstract principles (Waring, 2012; Pascale, 2011) that reflect beliefs about *ontology* (the nature of our human existence or what can be known about the world); *epistemology* (how can what is assumed about our existence be known) and *methodology* (what procedures or logic we believe should be followed to reflect the ontological and epistemological assumptions we make). Coe (2012, p. 1) states that while many researchers are influenced by each other and naturally gravitate towards common understandings, others are not so consistent in their research practice as the philosophers might “exhort them to be” and may find themselves moving between positions. This was comforting reading for me as I wanted to find some method of reconciling my previously held positioning and my background in the physical sciences with this new departure into the world of qualitative inquiry and narrative research in particular.

3.2.1 Resolving Tensions

Historically, research in the social sciences has been modelled on the established approached taken in the physical sciences. Qualitative research can trace its origins to early twentieth century positivism which emerged as part of a modernist discourse “to give an account of the triumphs of science and technology” (Kim, 2016, p. 3) in the generation of insight into social life (Pascale, 2011). The social sciences therefore emerged as part of a modernist twentieth century discourse of “progress” with its goals of objectivity and value neutrality.

Late twentieth century postmodernism interrupted the certainties of the scientific method however (Alexander, 2006) and unsettled the “taken for granted” understandings and representations of knowledge (Greene, 1994, p.433). Post-positivistic research laid emphasis on naturalistic and interpretive understandings of knowledge rather than observable, objectifiable phenomena. Opponents of positivism within social science began to reject the idea that human behaviour is ruled by universal laws and that there is objective

knowledge about the world and our lives in it. There is no one truth, says the postmodern voice (Greene, 1994, p. 440). Instead, there are multiple truths, “multiple sites from which the world is spoken” (Lather, 1991, p. 160). Late-twentieth century poststructuralism sought to engage in methodologies that explored the social world in ways that did not seek to uncover one unmediated truth (Fusco, 2008, p. 161). The shift from truth to truths, according to Van Niekerk and Savin-Baden (2010, p. 28), moved beyond positivism to a place where truths are seen to be “complex and fragile, and need to be seen as places where issues of power, consent and negotiation are mediated by our own values and biographies”.

Feminism and feminist writers have strongly influenced social research and contributed significantly to legitimising the biographical voice in social inquiry (Etorre, 2016; Hamdan, 2012; Aull-Davies, 2008) and thereby placed a value on personal experience in research, with all of its messiness, vulnerability and unpredictability. Feminist standpoint epistemology also posits that women’s lives and those of the marginalised in our society have been far too seldom the starting point for research and connected into the notion of seeing differently from new vantage points (Harding, 1993). From a new reference point, we can relearn how to look at the world and how to reflect in different ways on our lived and intersubjective life (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). According to Greene (1994, p. 440) to recognise this is “to become awake to the processes of our own sense-making”.

Even with new ways of knowing, grounded in lived experience, and viewed from new and previously unexplored vantage points, I found myself drawn to Merleau-Ponty’s claim that a totalised ‘exterior’ view of knowledge is still impossible (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). In all research, from any epistemological stance, the researcher cannot capture the literal truth of events in any attainable sense as we are bound by the limitations of our human experiences, and our human experiences are necessarily limited and temporal – we cannot tell more than we know, and we cannot know more than we experience. We can say very little with any certainty about life beyond our own thoughts and experiences (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2010; Alexander, 2006). Research in the human sphere cannot therefore seek out certainty beyond the realms of our immediate experience.

Furthermore, all human inquiry is about resolving problems of our own experience (Dewey, 1958), through examples communicated in “narratives, allegories and parables” (Alexander, 2006) and as such, knowledge of the human condition is first and foremost qualitative in nature. At the heart of qualitative research therefore is the desire to work with and study what it means to be human.

In Denzin and Lincoln’s most recent publication on qualitative inquiry (2018, p. xiii), the authors define the field as constituting a loosely defined community of scholars attempting to make sense of the human condition by implementing “a critical interpretive approach”, who locate themselves on the borders of post-positivism and poststructuralism, who employ a variety of research strategies including ethnography and ethnodrama, and who are interpretive bricoleurs, “adept” at using a multitude of methods for collecting and analysing data. This would seem to be a community in which I could locate myself and my research endeavours as a narrative inquirer.

3.3 Narrative Inquiry as Methodology

“Stories speak. Stories imagine. Stories bring worlds into being, making up the fabric that is stitched together by the symbolic and the material, coloring (sic) possibilities with our desires, and inviting us as participants in the work of co-creating futures”.

(Dutta, 2018, p. 94)

The constructivist paradigm assumes a naturalistic set of methodological procedures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 20) which are idiographic rather than nomothetic (Waring, 2012, p. 16), that is they emphasise the subjective and unique experience of the individual as having value. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011, p. 106) also elaborate on the hermeneutical nature of constructivist methodologies, the essential message of which is that “to be human is to mean” and that only by examining the complex and multifaceted nature of human meaning can we begin to understand and interpret. In my choice of methodology, I am therefore seeking to highlight the centrality of human relationships and

committing to making my research more human (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Dubnewick et al., 201; Kim, 2016; Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015; Grant, Short and Turner, 2013; Harrop and Narjad, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011).

Constructivism assumes that reality is constructed by the people who experience it and that experience of reality can differ for each of one of us. There are therefore multiple perspectives on reality and a congruent methodological framework to this ontology needs to allow research participants to speak of their own experiences of it (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 209). Epistemologically, the constructivist paradigm assumes that the investigator and the object of investigation are linked: who we are and what we know is a central part of how we come to understand – we cannot separate ourselves from what we know (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011, p. 104). Therefore, methodological congruence requires that understanding come from some form of consensus (p. 105) and is reached through “dialogue, shared conversation and construction” (p. 108). Congruent data collection methods include interviews or observation such that an “adequate” dialogue can occur to allow a collaboratively constructed meaningful understanding of reality to be reached (p. 105).

In Chapter 2, I have located myself as a qualitative inquirer within the postmodern, poststructuralist feminist tradition. There is a substantial literature on feminist research methodologies (Reinharz and Chase, 2002). At its most fundamental, feminist research practice challenges the hegemonic models of human knowledge and behaviour which are male dominated (Nicholson, 1996). Letherby (2011, p. 62) writes that there is no such thing as a single feminist research method. She holds that feminist research can be identified by its “sensitivity to the significance of gender within society” and the importance of critical approaches to researching it. Feminist research therefore places less emphasis on the methods used for data collection and more on the methodological ‘*reflectiveness*’ of the research. Doucet and Mauthner (2007) similarly argue that there is no specific feminist method or methodology but rather feminist scholars situate themselves along the broad continuum of existing critical approaches while embracing ‘particular characteristics’ in their work. These characteristics include the tendency for the research to be less ‘about’

women and more 'for' women, and preferably 'with' women. Feminist research praxis therefore strongly contests conventional (masculine) ways of collecting, analysing and presenting data by specifically challenging the norm of objective, positivistic research frameworks (Pascale, 2011). It draws on reflexivity and emotion as a source of insight and new knowledge, valuing the personal and private as worthy of study and develops creative and experimental ways of documenting women's experience in everyday worlds. The most significant difference between traditional and feminist research approaches however is that the research should mean something to those being studied and should result in some form of transformation or change in their daily lives or in the world in which they live (Kim 2016; Pascale, 2011; Letherby 2011; Doucet and Mauthner, 2007). The challenge for feminist scholarship according to Gallagher (2008) is therefore not just to engage with fellow scholars but to seek the views of those who might be a source of new knowledge and insight, who heretofore have been marginalised, unrepresented and unheard.

3.3.1 Story as human sense-making

Found Poem – 'For we dream in narrative'

'For we dream in narrative'

"For we dream in narrative

day-dream in narrative,

remember,

anticipate,

hope,

despair,

believe,

doubt,

plan,

revise,

criticize,
construct,
gossip,
learn,
hate,
and love
in narrative”.
(Hardy, 1968, p.5)

The history of humanity is really about the story of our coming to terms with the world we live in and all research in the human sphere is fundamentally concerned with understanding the world and how we see the world (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p.3; Sugiyama, 1996). Story is central to our quest to understand the human condition, a quest that can be traced through the centuries from classic Greek and Roman literature, through to oral and literary story-telling traditions, and on into contemporary narrative analysis. Baumann (1986) viewed the oral folktale as verbal art, the symbolic forms of which existed solely in situated human action. The written texts that emerged from the oral tradition had roots that were thus firmly established in human social and cultural life. Oral story-telling traditions in particular are, according to Baumann, “doubly anchored in human events” (Baumann, 1986, p.6) as they are linked to the events in which they are told and the events that they recount. The story ‘teller’ (or performer) tells what he knows from his/ her lived experience and makes it the experience of those who are listening to the story.

The social sciences tend to look “inward” to the study of the relationship between narratives and the lived events which they recount – in other words, towards an understanding of narrative as it emerges from lived human experience – unlike Labovian literary traditions which tend to look “outward” towards an analysis of the relationships between the narratives and the events themselves that they seek to recount. Squire (2013, p. 48) views the distinction as being one of experience-centred versus event-centred narrative research, the former resonating with my own research intentions and which is

congruent with a philosophical stance that seeks to construct knowledge through lived experiences (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011, p. 103).

3.3.2 Narrative as Inquiry

“These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist each other’s assistance in building lives and communities”.

(Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p.35)

Narrative is the primary sense-making tool of our lived human existence (Chase, 2018; Kim 2016, p. 9; Squire 2013, p. 50; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000). We derive “life lessons” from our own experiences via the telling of stories (Meyer, 2018, p. 22) and thus bring meaning to our own lives. Etymologically speaking, Kim (2016, p. 6) considers narrative as a form of knowledge which captures both the concept of knowing and telling. According to Kim (2016, p. 8) while often used interchangeably in the research literature, there is a distinction between narrative and story such that the latter can be described as a “detailed organization (sic) of narrative events arranged in a (story) structure based on time”. As experience itself is never ordered, narratives of experience require interpretation and the imposition of shape and structure to enable us to bring meaning to them. Kim concludes therefore that “narratives constitute stories and stories rely on narratives” – they are “deeply intertwined”. I find this clarification very helpful as they are indeed used interchangeably in the literature.

Narrative as inquiry therefore offers a mechanism for our stories to become *interpreted* narratives of experience, providing windows and doors to understanding and to theorising and thus can act to bring us to new knowledge and thus to change. They speak to us, they bring the world into being (Dutta 2018), weaving together the threads of our experiences and shedding new light on them to help us with the process of meaning-making (Chase 2018; Squire 2013; Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). We tell stories to live (Holman-Jones 2016,

p. 230; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000) as “they are an essential strategy of human existence” (Kim, 2016, p. 6). They are our living realities: “through action and speech, we insert ourselves in the world” (Arendt, cited in Etorre, 2016). Stories are therefore essential to human understanding (Ellis, 2004) providing us with a map for that understanding to happen. They tell of the past and the present, and the processes by which these merge and are stitched together (Hamdan, 2012). They can also envision the future, and that future starts in the very moment the story is told.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 37) mapped the emergence of the field of narrative inquiry from the 1960s, highlighting its cross-disciplinary nature as it does not fit “within the boundaries of any single scholarly field”. Narrative is everywhere and seeps into every aspect of our lived experiences:

“Two or three things I know for sure, and one of them is that personal narrative surrounds us: pervasive, proliferating, multiplying, consolidating, dispersing”.

(Langellier, 1999, p.125)

Narrative has been gaining an increasingly high profile in social research (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013). There is what could be termed a bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013) of theoretical perspectives encompassed by contemporary narrative research and this underlies its broad appeal across the innumerable methodologies and methods that are employed by researchers in the field. This evolution across multiple paradigms (realist, positivist, post-positivist, constructivist) suggests a desire in the field of social inquiry to go beyond conventional boundaries and to fully realise the potential for research to make “a contribution to the study of human experiences” (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p.37) and to understand the deeper nuances and complexities of the experiences of the individual. Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013, p.2) attribute this trend to the growing desire to “see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them in useful dialogue with each other and to understand more about individual and social change”. Thus narrative research can fit into the postmodern, poststructuralist tradition in which I have located myself as a feminist inquirer, one which

seeks to question orthodoxy and frame resistance towards established power structures (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013, p. 4).

3.4 A theoretical framework for narrative research

3.4.1 Bruner's Theory of Narrative

Kim (2016, p. 10) tells us that the theories of Jerome Bruner contributed to establishing narrative inquiry as a legitimate methodology in social science. Bruner theorised that there are two very distinct modes of human thought – narrative (or story) mode and paradigmatic (or analytical) mode and the dominant mode is in fact narrative (Meyer 2018; Rutten and Soetaert, 2013; Bruner, 2004). Rutten and Soetaert (2013, p. 329) contend that Bruner's theory of narrative as a specific mode of human 'knowing' has been instrumental in the growth of the narrative turn in the social sciences, especially his desire to study narrative at its farthest "reach" – as an art form. He held that if narrative is to be an instrument of human meaning-making, it requires work on our part (Bruner, 1986, p. 15, cited in Rutten and Soetaert, 2013) and accordingly, studying works of fiction that transform narrative into an art form is the best way to reveal the deep structures at work in the narrative mode of thinking.

Bruner (2005) proposed that narrative analysis should "unpack" literary fiction – in order to sense its meaning we need to read it, make it, analyse it and understand it as an art, a form that makes good stories "powerful and compelling". He was interested in the mimesis between "life so-called" and narrative (Bruner, 2004), or the way life imitates narrative, and narrative imitates life. According to Bruner (2004), "life so-called" involves the same processes of construction of the human imagination as narrative. In other words, there is no such thing as "life itself" but rather the telling of one's story is a narrative achievement of memory and recall and "beyond that, it is a narrative interpretive feat" (Bruner, 2004).

3.4.2 Imposing Shape and Order

Chase (2018, p. 547) holds that narrative is a distinct form of social discourse which is a form of retrospective meaning making, providing a way of understanding our own and others' actions by bringing order and structure to past experiences. Life itself is not ordered, and a process of narratisation is essential to being human because it creates patterns and imposes shape and order on our experiences. One of the strengths of narrative inquiry as a research methodology is therefore the importance of narrative techniques such as pattern and configuration, the processes by which story-threads are drawn together into a whole in both oral narratisation (Meyer, 2018; Colyar and Holley, 2010; King and Horrocks, 2010; Craig and Huber, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988) and the literary narrative tradition. Story-telling provides a lens through which outwardly unconnected and disjointed narratives of life experiences can come together to make a whole and this process of emplotment therefore can distinguish 'life as told' from 'life as lived' (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000; Reissman, 2008; King and Horrocks, 2010).

King and Horrocks (2010) draw on Polkinghorne's (1997) concept of "narrative knowing" which they describe as our mental capacity to put structure and order on our experiences to create an outward and seeming relatedness. Similarly, Kim (2016, p. 156) draws on Robinson and Hawpe's (1986) concept of "narrative thinking" as a way of creating story out of our experiences. Narrative thinking involves our use of narrative schema or organising strategies "that consists of questions to be answered such as: what happened? to whom? why?" as a means of linking outwardly unconnected pieces of information. Coupled with our prior knowledge and past experiences, as storyteller we then draw on a range of cognitive strategies including "selecting, comparing, inferring, arranging and revising" (Kim, 2016, p. 157) to make sense of these past experiences and to bring a new layer of meaning to them in the form of a story.

Furthermore, the sequencing and pattern of oral narratisation can provide insights and new understandings for the reader as culture can speak through the shape of the narrative as much as through the text (Reissman, 2002; 2008; Elliot, 2005). Reissman (2008, p. 190)

contends that 'life as lived' is "pre-narrative" as it does not necessarily have shape or coherence, but with interpretation and mediation through creative acts such as the literary writing of fiction for example, life can become story. 'Life as told' can transform the incoherence, ambiguity and messiness of 'life as lived' into a meaningful version of the events being narrated.

3.4.3 We are not the sole authors of 'our story'

In addition to the processes of narrative knowing or narrative thinking discussed above, King and Horrocks (2010, p. 74) identify characterisation and focalisation as narrative elements that can be used as "weight-bearing" walls to support the organisation of qualitative research texts. As writers, by looking to characterisation we are thinking about the players in our story and what their role is; by attending to focalisation, the location from which the characters and events are viewed, we are addressing the question of voice. In traditional storytelling, as in traditional research reporting, the narrator serves as the focaliser, located outside of the text, allowing the story to unfold, almost anonymously, at a distance. At the other end of the spectrum, in autobiography and autoethnography, the narrator is the main character and is at the centre of events, the plot moving the story outward from the narrator to the reader. However, even as such, as the focal point of our own story, we are not the only authors of our story – there are many 'others' who co-exist in our experiences, some with big parts, others smaller, but all are co-conspirators in our storied lives and sense-making.

Fitting readily into the postmodern, poststructuralist paradigm, in narratives of personal experience no single teller has "easy, stable" (Cousins, 2010, p. 14) access to the naming of their own reality. As human beings we draw on "the interpretive repertoire" of our inherited enculturated language and shared understandings acquired through the processes of socialisation (Bruner, 2004). We are what we experience; our view of the world comes from being in the world. Accordingly, we are what we have seen as well as what we have "erased

from view” (Cousins, 2010, p. 10). We are part of the social world, as bodies among bodies (Roth, 2005, p.8-9). Our stories, whether told in dialogue with others or as monologic autobiographies, cannot speak for themselves. They cannot provide unmediated access to other times, places or cultures - they must be interpreted (Griffiths and Macleod, 2008, p.138; Cousins, 2010, p.10) and the processes of interpretation are not ‘innocent’. As both human beings and qualitative inquirers researching in the human sphere, we are story-tellers, we are listeners and we are story “re-tellers.” In any and all of these roles, we look at our world from a particular stance, imbuing it with our biases, and articulate it through an available, enculturated, inherited language.

3.4.4 Reflexivity in Narrative Research

Kim (2016, p. 249) holds that reflexivity is critical to the postmodernist, poststructuralist philosophy, requiring the researcher to take stock of actions taken at every stage of the research from the design, data collection and on into the interpretation and reporting. Reflexivity is the process of bringing ourselves into the research by acknowledging our subjectivities and biases in our research ‘story’. The reflexive researcher is intimately connected to, and personally invested in, the research. It is critical in the narrative turn especially to acknowledge that all knowledge is mediated and interpreted from a particular bias or stance (Cousins, 2010, p.10; Bruner, 2004) and to recognise that we need to make these historically constituted positions known to the reader (Roth, 2005). Reflexivity is an *iterative* process of self-reference (Aull-Davies, 2008). It is a constant concern for our positionality, a perpetual looking back at the self, working to understand how our personal experiences have shaped our understandings (Finlay and Gough, 2003; Soyini-Madison, 2005) and how the products of the research are affected by these understandings. Kim (2016, p. 248-249) contends that while self-reflection is a process whereby the researcher takes a step back from the research, reflexivity is akin to taking another step back from the process of reflection: it is “a reflection on the reflection” through which we make ourselves “an object of our own gaze”.

There is also a need for the reflexive narrative researcher in the poststructuralist tradition to find the creative balance between familiarity and strangeness. Rowe (2003) discusses the importance of entering the field open to seeing the 'ordinary' as strange or unusual. However, we do not come to the research as strange as we are never "intellectually empty-handed" (Geertz, cited in Rowe, 2003) as nothing is totally new. We are embedded in the social world that we are investigating. Rowe (2003) further contends that it is our very subjectivities and our own meanings that can unveil the strange in the familiar, that can unsettle the "taken-for-grantedness" (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p.78) of life as lived. This constellation of strangeness and familiarity could be said to describe the reflexivity that is implicit in narrative inquiry: the familiarity of 'life as lived' described as the strangeness of 'life as told'; the 'usual' alerting us to the 'unusual' (Rowe, 2003, p. 191).

Reflexivity can be both a problem and a solution however - how much or how little of the self to reveal to avoid the taint of self-absorption (Aull-Davies, 2008) yet sufficient to bring our own subjectivities to bear to counteract the detached, impersonalised and privileged products of scientific methodologies (Finlay, 2003, p.2), for example. Writing 'the personal' demands a 'self' that is ready for the reflexive turn, ready to give an honest account for the heart (Pelias, 2004). It requires rigorous, multi-layered and demanding levels of reflexivity, but how is that achieved in a manner that does not leave the reader feeling uncomfortable (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013) and awkward, as if they have somehow invaded private and internal worlds? Bruner (2004) considers that any narratisation of one's own life to be a privileged but troubled terrain because of this reflexivity as both the narrator and the central figure are one and the same. I hold that Bruner's concerns could be extended to any interpretation of the storied life of 'an other' because it is told to the listener by the teller *autobiographically*. Bruner (2004) contends that while problems of self-narrative include issues of verification, rationalisation and indeterminacy (wherein the very act of storytelling distorts what was intended to be told in the first place), there is still merit in its form, despite its "shakiness", because of what he calls the "criteria of Tightness" that we impose on the self-report of a life. Such criteria are deemed by Bruner (2004) to be just as demanding as those of verification and rationalisation and include internal criteria such as

how the storyteller feels or what was intended by the telling of the story, for example. While we can never say for certain which narratives are more meaningful, ring ‘more true’ or run deeper than others, there is still “merit” in the narrative form, as Bruner (2004, p. 691) suggests, because all “verification criteria turn slippery, and we surely cannot judge Tightness by narrative adequacy alone”.

3.4.5 ‘Unboundedness’

By choosing to work with narrative of personal experiences, Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 63) tell us that we are positioned in the “midst of stories, located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal and the social”. I could replace the term ‘midst’ with that of ‘mist’ or ‘fog’ or some such noun which gives the reader a sense of being located along a continuum of these four dimensions without the ability to pinpoint the exact location at any given time. Reflexive narrative research needs to take account therefore of time and place as well as the personal and the social. Lives do not stand still; they do not begin or end on the day the story was told (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 64). As Bruner (2004) tells us

“The man who takes the trouble to tell of himself knows that the present differs from the past and that it will not be repeated in the future”.

(Bruner, 2004, p. 691-710)

This temporal shift can create a sense of always mistiming our arrival – it is as if we come too late yet appear to arrive too early (Geertz, in Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). Narrative inquiry can be described as a series of iterations of “living, telling, retelling and reliving” stories (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p.71). This retelling and reliving infers both a physical and temporal distance from the actual events and describes the unbounded nature of narrative inquiry, which can open us up to new opportunities and new possibilities (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 89). However, the consequences of this unboundedness is that we are always adrift (Cousins, 2010) in some sense; we are always “re-presenting”

ourselves to ourselves through this iterative storying process. There is no such thing as unmediated, uncontaminated knowledge as we are constantly interpreting and re-interpreting to create new meanings and new knowledge, mediating through time, space and place. As postmodern, poststructuralist researchers working with narrative of experience, we must therefore take responsibility for our interpretations and the influences that not only our own personal experiences and biases have had on that interpretation (Rowe, 2003) but the effects of time and space on that process also.

3.4.6 Interpenetration – ‘bodies among bodies’.

Narrative inquiry involves a complexity of relationships and interpenetration of people in relation to each other - we are bodies among bodies (Roth, 2005). The space, time and place of the shared storytelling experience is a site where people interact with each other using a shared language and shared meanings, and where the authoring of experiences happens interactively in relationship to each other (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Intersubjective reflexivity in postmodern, poststructuralist qualitative research (Finlay, 2003, p.8-9) entails an examination of the mutual meanings and shared language of the research relationship and this is particularly the case in narrative inquiry as relationships form the nexus of the methodology; it is a “relational endeavour” (Josellson, 2007, p. 539). Every aspect of the work is affected by the research relationship. What is required therefore is more than just personal reflection; it is a much deeper and radical process of self-reflection, an exploration of the self *in relation* to others, an examination of the mutual meanings at the heart of the research relationship. We must look critically at our emotional investment in the research relationship and identify how this investment has shaped the research encounter (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000; Finlay, 2003; Rowe, 2003). We must turn our critical gaze to the “situated, emergent and negotiated” nature of these encounters (Finlay, 2003, p. 8).

3.4.7 Working with experience-centred narrative

Reflexive experienced-centred narrative research is underpinned by a concern (Soyini-Madison, 2005, p. 14) for positionality, which forces narrative researchers in the field to acknowledge “our own power, privilege and biases”. We are encouraged to look back on ourselves, to examine how our biases, intentions, and relationships have influenced the processes and products of the research. Qualitative inquirers can struggle with issues of our own subjectivity but as long as these subjectivities are fore-fronted and disclosed along with our concerns with the influences of our experiences and biases on the research, our desire to give an ‘honest’ account to our reader will emerge through the writing. This desire and constant striving for deep-rooted honesty is perhaps what can make working with experience-centred narrative a struggle, but it can also serve to create evocative, engaging and seductive texts (Pelias, 2011), which “instead of offering claims to Truth (sic), sticky with smugness (Colyar, 2013, p. 376) can offer “small, nervous solutions, offered with humility” (Pelias, 2011, p. 666).

Kim (2016, p. 120) refers to narrative inquirers as “metaphoric midwives” who mediate participant stories into being. Supported by Bruner’s theories of narrative or story as a specific mode of human thought and drawing on Polkinghorne’s (1997) concept of ‘narrative knowing’ (King and Horrocks, 2010) to impose structure and shape on our stories of experience, my intention as a reflexive narrative researcher, story teller and a story ‘re-teller’ is to listen with an openness and honesty that will allow me access to a new story of ‘life as lived’ by these women in management and leadership roles in HE in Ireland.

3.5 The Narrative Interview – Narrative as Method

“Many narrative inquirers become so enamoured with stories and the study of stories – things to be “picked up,” listened to, categorised, written down – that they lose track of the fact that narratives begin as living things created in the moment-to-moment action and interaction of particular people in a particular place, at a particular time, engaged in particular events”.

(Clandinin, 2007, p.247)

3.5.1 The Postmodern Interview

Postmodernism fundamentally changed wider society in terms of both how we conceive of it and how we perceive ourselves in it. The postmodern turn encouraged researchers to interrogate the notion of objective, value-free inquiry, and instead acknowledged the influence of their personal, political and professional interests (Ellis and Berger, 2012). Methodologies emerged that privileged the personal and the everyday reality of the individual. Attention was turned to these outwardly insignificant events and the focus was on how to “unpack these knowledge “fragments” to better understand ourselves” (Fontana, 2002, p.161-162). There was what Fontana labels a “heightened sensibility” to concerns that had been ignored, and previously unarticulated voices from the margins would now be given the opportunity to be heard.

Postmodern interviewing was to be primarily characterised by a significant blurring of the boundaries between interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer was no longer objectified, distant or apart, but was to become a co-member of a communicative partnership (Fontana, 2002, p. 166). The interview itself was/is a site for collaboration between interviewer and interviewee in narrative constructions of lived experience, an active relationship in which issues of power, emotionality and representation are to the fore (Brinkmann, 2018; Ellis and Berger, 2012; Johnson, 2002; Fontana, 2002). An integral facet of this relationship is an emerging reciprocity, a continuous shifting back and forth of power, emotionality, empathy and respect, as each respond to each other, or as Chase (2018, p. 548) puts it, a mutual “respect for another as other”. Furthermore, the interview becomes a site of meaning-making and knowledge creation between two equal partners in a *negotiated* relationship (Fontana, 2002, p. 168). In this dialogic and performative engagement (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 577), the emerging voices of both interviewer and interviewee are of interest. There is a concern for the respondent’s understandings, but the voice of the researcher is also of interest, along with her/his own understandings which come to the fore when framing and representing the emergent knowledge. The researcher is therefore no longer written out of the research interview in the interests of

objectification, and member-based knowledge is no longer stigmatized (Johnson, 2002). In fact, it has become acceptable for the researcher, as in my own case, to explore a phenomenon about which they have a prior 'stock of knowledge'.

3.5.2 Power Asymmetry and the Narrative Interview

Brinkmann (2018, p. 588) draws our attention to this growth in the use of the qualitative interview in light of the dangers of what he terms "qualitative ethicism", by which he implies that there can be a self-serving assumption that qualitative inquiry, and particularly the qualitative interview, is inherently ethical, particularly when compared to quantitative research methods. To counteract this "myth" of "qualitative progressivity" he outlines the power characteristics of the interview engagement which are often overlooked by qualitative researchers in their explications, and which make it a less than equitable endeavour. These include the obvious fact there is an underlying asymmetry in the power relationship in the research interview because:

"The interviewer has scientific competence and defines the interview situation. The interviewer initiates the interview, determines the interview topic, poses the questions, and critically analyses the answers, and also terminates the conversation. It is illusory to think that the research interview is a dominance-free dialogue between equal partners..."

(Brinkmann, 2018, p. 588)

This notion draws my attention to the fact that as researchers, irrespective of the paradigm in which we are operating, we i) define the agenda and set both ii) the direction and iii) the pace of the interview from the outset. Furthermore, the interview is still fundamentally designed to serve the researcher's goals and is never a goal in itself – it's purpose is to provide the researcher with 'data' to collate and analyse according to a design that was predetermined by her/ him before the interview took place. This asymmetry in the power relationship is most keenly evidenced by the fact that the researcher ultimately has the

'monopoly' on the manner of the data interpretation and representation that is to be used. According to Brinkmann (2018, p. 589) the researcher is the "big interpreter" and lays claim to the sole "privilege" of interpreting and reporting the interviewee's words. I recognise this "privilege" as being 'doubly-anchored', to use Baumann's (1986, p.6) term, in the researcher, as we not only set ourselves up as having the academic competence to report and interpret the interviewee's intentions and meanings, but we also inevitably imbue that interpretation with our own personal biases and subjectivities as researchers.

To counter this asymmetry however, in support of the interview as method in epistemologies of lived experience, what is "deep inside" the interviewer can be opened up for exploration - questions are asked of her/him which require a high level of comfort with "under the surface emotional matters" (Rosenblatt, 2012, p. 899). According to Trinh (2012, p. 845), the postmodern interview is therefore a deeply reflexive method of "looking, hearing, and asking that is dialogic and respectful". Since the 1970s, feminist researchers especially have made good use of the qualitative research interview to take account of the contradictions and conflicts of women's lives (Reinharz and Chase, 2002; Nicholson, 1996). The interview can provide a means of 'unravelling' women's views on the realities of their career and family lives (Pilcher and Coffey, 1996; Gallagher, 2008) and provides the interpretive, naturalistic researcher with a "construction site" for new knowledge from the standpoint of those who are central to the ongoing action (Fusco, 2008).

3.5.3. The Interview as Intervention – 'transient and temporal'

While all research interviews are fundamentally undertaken with the principal aim of bringing about change in the "researcher's understanding of the phenomena of interest" (Josellson, 2007, p.546), when using narrative inquiry in particular to collect the data, the very act of interviewing itself can alter the very phenomena that is under scrutiny as a consequence of the relatedness central to the methodology (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p.45). People are seen as the embodiments of storied lives in storied landscapes; their lives

are shaped and reshaped through the act of storytelling which means the interview itself becomes an intervention (Josellson, 2007), a change mechanism and a meaning-making tool (Squire, 2013; Chase, 2018). However, the intervention is temporal, and as such transient, and therefore subject to further change and intervention in another re-telling, in another place and space. Researching in the human sphere can only ever be partial and incomplete, as the human being is itself “never a finished image” (Freeman, 2007, p.138), never a “whole” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 581). From a postmodern, poststructuralist perspective, the human ‘being’ is always in progress, with ways of ‘being’ that are forever shifting, fragmented and on the move. According to Dewey (1958), experience is the fundamental ontological category from which all inquiry in the human sphere proceeds. Our lived experience is therefore always in progress, and narrative inquirers can only study that experience and produce narratives of that experience as a snapshot in time – our research stories can never aspire to being anything other than incomplete and unfinished as a consequence. Kim (2016, p. 235) cites Dewey on the notion of completeness as that which leaves no room for resolution or, I would add, transformation because when everything is already ended, there can be no “fulfilment”. Aligning myself with this concept of incompleteness, reading Eavan Boland’s poem ‘Patchwork’ again, I find myself more comfortable with the idea that there might be any number of story configurations that could be crafted from the participant narratives, just like Boland’s patchwork spheres and squares, if they were laid out on a different floor, on a different night and viewed in a different light;

*“Only when it’s laid
right across the floor,
sphere on square
and seam on seam,
in a good light -
a night-sky spread -*

will it start to hit me.

These are not bits.

They are pieces.

And the pieces fit.

(Lines from 'Patchwork', by Eavan Boland)

3.5.4 Coherence or Ambiguity

Stories are created in the moment and are living, organic things and as such, 'messy', shapeless and incoherent (Clandinin, 2007, p. 247). Czarniawska (2007) talks about the act of storying as one of pattern-finding, pattern elaboration and pattern-fitting. In narrative inquiry, the interview can be likened to a "construction site" (Fusco, 2008) where stories can be shaped and moulded into coherence by both the teller and the listener. Stories are boundless, temporal and fragmented things, narrated in 'bits and pieces', and thus disjointed and wandering. These story fragments need therefore to be woven together in an interactive and interpenetrative process that takes place between teller and listener. It is this interpenetration of stories, this mutual co-construction particular to narrative inquiry, that can create new meanings and new knowledge.

However Brinkmann, citing Frosh (2007, in Brinkmann, 2018, p. 581), cautions the narrative inquirer against this drive to "present human experience in ways that set up coherent themes that constitute integrated wholes" when the human being is, as discussed above, never itself a "whole." Rather, we must try to remain open to multiplicity and complexity and listen for the multiple interpretations that could be attributed to the stories we are privileged to hear. Ambiguity and openness could bring a freshness of approach and counter the power asymmetry in qualitative interviewing identified by Brinkmann (2018) above. Prioritising coherence in narrative inquiry could in fact be perceived as researcher bias

against the ambiguity that is a feature of human storytelling and the performative nature of the story-telling act itself. It is incumbent on us as qualitative researchers to pay attention to our rationale for prioritising coherence over the many other tools at our disposal in the search for narrative meaning. In addition, Brinkmann (2018, p. 581) suggests that we must be careful not to overemphasise the quest for, and thus the primacy of, the individual voice at the expense of glossing over the richness and complexity of the narratives themselves and their descriptions.

By undertaking narrative interviewing from a postmodern perspective, I knowingly committed to work with both the ambiguity and uncertainty of the “fundamental unit of human experience” (Clandinin, 2007, p.4), which is the story. However, Chase (2018, p. 548) cautions the qualitative researcher against the assumption that “humans think, speak, and bring meaning to their lives *only* through storytelling” stating that there are other *nonnarrative* ways of communicating and meaning making (for example, through art, photography or poetry). She concedes however that while narrative is not *exceptional* as a meaning-making tool, it is nonetheless essential to the human condition that we bring the world into order and coherence and narration is essential to that process.

3.6 Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry

Kim (2016) suggests that narrative inquirers should categorise their work by the narrative genre or form that they use to mediate stories and considers it an important step in the research design process, allowing us to stay attuned to the direction of the data collection and interpretation. I align myself with Kim on this and find her three categories of narrative inquiry genre (autobiographical encompassing autobiography and autoethnography, biographical including life-story, life history and oral history and finally, arts-based) together provide an umbrella under which much of my reading in narrative inquiry could find a home. Kim (2016, p. 1) further states that for her, narrative inquiry is a “perfect hybrid of research and art” whereby her interest in the literary arts is in perfect alignment with her research

ambitions. She defines narrative inquiry which uses literary genres such as fiction, novels, short-story, poetry, drama and creative non-fiction as literary arts-based narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016, p. 121). Like Kim, I found myself drawn towards literary arts-based narrative inquiry as a means of fulfilling my own desire to intertwine my doctoral research ambitions with my personal passion for the literary and theatre arts.

3.6.1 Arts-Based Research in Qualitative Inquiry

Denzin and Lincoln (2011; 2018) situate the emergence and development of qualitative research in a series of historical moments from 1900 onwards, one of which they refer to as 'Blurred Genres' spanning the 70s and early 80s. This period they define as a time when "the humanities became central resources for critical, interpretive theory" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 10) in qualitative research, in which social scientists started to draw from the humanities and the researcher became a bricoleur, becoming adept at "borrowing" from many different disciplines. According to Kim (2016, p. 137) the genre-blurring period led to an attempt to dissolve the "arts-science" dichotomy, and social sciences explored "combining scientific research with artistic design elements that are more evocative, enabling readers to vicariously experience the lives of people through their stories". This resulted in research writing that resembles the literary arts in its attempts to interweave fact or what is believed to be known as true about social life, with what Kim (2016, p. 137) refers to as "facticity" or a description of how the facts were lived and experienced. Facts and facticity are then linked together using the writing strategies of literary fiction. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 10) the "blurred genre" period was followed by a period characterised by a crisis of representation, when social scientists further mined the humanities to such an extent that the "line between a text and a context blurred" and sought to produce texts that "refuse to be read in simplistic, linear and incontrovertible terms". The authors state that in the current postmodern, experimental era, researchers are continuing to move towards alternative evaluative criteria in their efforts to produce more evocative, moral, critical research that is "rooted in local understandings".

As such, arts-based research has an established provenance in the qualitative research paradigm and has contributed substantially to changing the landscape of what constitutes qualitative research. Social inquiry can provide a vast arena for aesthetic forms of experience (Kim, 2016, p. 138), and increasingly social scientists “accept and employ” poetic and literary modes of interpretation and representation in their research.

3.6.2 Art as an Instrument of Understanding

The enlargement of our understanding as humans is not confined to literal, textual forms but is in fact the “child of many forms” (Barone and Eisner, 2012). The Arts feed the human mind, body and soul. Art helps us to imagine new worlds and new possibilities (Dolan, 2007). Aesthetic and artistically rendered material can be crucial to that understanding.

Gombrich (1997 p. 15) informs us that there is no such thing as art, just artists who try to convey meaning through their works of ‘art’, which is a “word that may mean very different things in different times and places”. Art is generally taken to refer to a means through which we can see the world; it is an instrument of understanding. All human work is art, and art is a form of meaning-making and creative expression. When we look at the world we can seek and find understanding in film, poetry, the novel, music, dance, theatre and the visual arts. Most of us can find it in all or some of these representations but are these representations concerned with truth or are they just modes of individual expression that can be chosen to prove one’s own subjective impressions and understandings? The documentary film-maker Errol Morris (in O’ Donnell, 2015) believes that while truth is neither subjective nor relative, his cinematic artwork is still about seeking an understanding of truth and bringing that understanding to his audience:

“Cinema is no more a vehicle for truth than a magazine or a book. It’s just another of those devices that we use to tell stories. A vehicle. But I think underneath it, on the part of the person actually making the films, there can be an interest in truth and in the pursuit of truth that can be captured and talked about in a movie”.

(Morris, in O’ Donnell, 2015)

Furthermore, arts-based research is intended to create divergent new possibilities rather than to converge towards one single 'truth', and so is deeply embedded in postmodernism and the recognition that there are in fact multiple truths. De Mello (2007) considers that the creator of a work of art which is a product of the research process creates the conditions for the consumer (reader, viewer, audience member) to have an aesthetic experience. The consumer of any text will therefore create a new experience in the process of engaging with it (Dewey, 1958) to discover new meaning. The consumer's interpretation might differ fundamentally from the original intentions of the artist because the meaning-making may be interpreted from a worldview that is significantly different from that of the artist. A cultural text's identity as a work of imagination or fact can therefore depend on the interplay between the features of the text and how it is contextualised by the artist. The line between fact and fiction, truth, and truths, is therefore not a line at all but a boundary that shifts within every encounter of the text in the search for meaning (Barone and Eisner, 2012). The artist or creator of the 'work' of art must relinquish control and ownership with each such encounter and allow meaning to emerge beyond his/ her control.

3.6.3 A Literary Arts-Based Narrative Inquiry

De Mello (2007) defines research as arts-based if art is applied in the research process as part of the method, as a way of gathering data for example, while arts-informed research he considers to be research where art is used as part of the analysis, as a way of informing the meaning making, directing the transition from field text to research texts. McNiff (2013) considers arts-based research to encompass both. Barone and Eisner (2012, p.1) hold that arts-based research is "an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable". The artist's job is therefore to say what we cannot imagine, what we do not have the words to say as the limitations of our language do not have to define the boundaries of our understanding.

Using De Mello's (2009) distinction, my research could be seen as constituting an arts-informed research project, resulting in 'works' of art or research representations for the purposes of dissemination and consumption. However as the data has been collected by way of story-making and story-sharing, it could also be seen in the broader sense of arts-based research. While perhaps more correctly positioned as an *arts-informed* narrative inquiry as per De Mello (2009), my research would appear to fall under the broad umbrella of *arts-based* research as defined by Barone and Eisner (2012), and this term is more widely used in the literature.

Barone and Eisner (2012) actively endorse narrative inquiry as a form of arts-based research when it is used to seek out "the evocative and aesthetic qualities in narrative" and both have been key players in the legitimisation of arts-based research in academia over the last twenty years or more (Kim, 2016, p. 138). Kim herself further divides arts-based narrative inquiry into literary-based and visual-based and it is the former (using literary forms such as fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry and drama to tell stories) that I draw on throughout this dissertation both to represent the participant stories and to discuss and engage with the material. Kim (2016, p.138) sets realistic goals for me when she states that as the products of research, our literary output could never be considered to be "full-fledged art" but the more "art-like features" that it can encompass, the more emotionally engaging it can be with the potential to reach a wider audience.

3.7 Storying our 'impressions' of a life

Writing is central to the ethnographic process (Geertz, 1973). The cover photo of Clifford & Marcus' (1986) seminal text depicts the ethnographer Stephen Tyler in 1963, hunched over and scribbling furiously. The authors surmise that he could have been doing dictation, fleshing out an interpretation or "dashing off" a poem. Geertz (1973) claimed that the "doing" of ethnography is like trying to read a manuscript in the sense of "trying to construct a reading of" that manuscript for the consumer, and that that reading might be "foreign,

faded, full of ellipses, incoherences, suspicious emendations and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventional graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10).

Both the creative act of writing and the act of creative writing are firmly established in traditional ethnographic practice, where the academic and literary genres interpenetrate and, Clifford and Marcus (1986, p. 1) assert, “the poetic and the political” are inseparable. Denzin (2014) states that as all writing is fictional, it is time to do away with the unnecessary distinction between fact and fiction. Through the process of this research, I have become interested in the various styles of writing, storying and representation that have become recognisable as predominantly autoethnographic – poetic, fictive and dramatic - and find myself drawn to the work of Ellis, Brochner, Richardson, Adams, Holman-Jones, Snyder-Young, Pelias, Saldana and Spry. Writing and storytelling are embedded in the practice of ethnography (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 68; Denzin, 2014; Ellis and Brochner, 1996; Clifford and Marcus, 1986) to such an extent that it could be said to be defined by the act of writing. According to Ellis (2004), writing in this research tradition is both method and methodology, process and product.

Van Mannen’s (1988) early typology of ethnographic ‘tales of the field’ offers researchers a method of describing how we situate ourselves when representing our work and I find this a very helpful tool to direct, and in some sense rationalise, my own efforts to represent myself and my participants and our work ‘in the field.’ Drawing from the language of art critique, he offers *realism* and *impressionism* as two possible approaches to take when describing the types of tales that can be told and the relationships that researchers have with self, others, culture and his or her field material. Realism in art and literature is taken to imply that the artist is attempting to represent the familiar and the everyday in an accurate and un-idealised manner. Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2015) consider realism in writing to be a complete and comprehensive version of the reality of events as opposed to impressionistic renderings, which seek only to create an impression of the events, rather like the impressionist painter who uses ill-defined and unconventional brush techniques and who plays with light and colour to render a ‘sense of’ an image or experience. Gombrich

(1984) tells us that artists such as Manet wanted to leave us with impressions of blurred forms caught in the act of movement, for example, by giving only hints and suggestions for us to work with. According to Gombrich (1984) impressionistic artists did not want to let knowledge influence representation of form. This for me describes the distinction between realistic and impressionistic writing representations and clarifies my own objective as being that of wanting to leave the reader with an impression, out of which the reader will gain new insights and understandings of lived personal experiences and the culture in which these experiences are played out. Endeavouring to represent human story, the 'life as lived', in the fullness of its depth and magnitude could conceivably be considered an impossible task. However, if I can represent what I can '*vouch for*' from my experience of, and engagement with, the participants, and not let the depth of my 'knowledge' influence the representation, it becomes an altogether more feasible and less over-whelming prospect for both researcher and reader to engage with.

According to Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis (2015, p. 86), impressionistic writers want to create a sense of the overall experience for their readers, "focusing as often on the everyday subjects as on the epiphanies that shake, test, and change us". They seek to describe and evoke the "sights, smells, tastes and movements of a place, space or context"; they use the rhythms and patterns of language, as well as those of silence and omission; they draw the reader in and immerse them in the human experience to suggest new ways of seeing and knowing the world by using first or even second person narration, leaving the reader with a sense of immediacy and intimacy perhaps hitherto considered as being an anathema to the research process. And their writing, the impressions it makes and the imprints it leaves behind, *is* their mode of interpretation and analysis. Co-constructed narratives, collaborative ethnographies and interactive interviews all fit readily into the framework of impressionistic writing of which the work of Ellis in particular is an exemplar (Ellis and Rawicki, 2017; Ellis and Brochner, 2017; Davis and Ellis, 2010; Ellis, 2004). Ellis and Berger (2002) include examples of interactive, reflexive storying of interview experiences which could be described as impressionistic, and from which I have gained inspiration for the creative non-fiction stories I have written of the participant interviews (see Chapter 5). In

this mode, the interview engagement is a collaborative affair as both parties participate meaningfully to the point where the distinction between the interviewer and the interviewee is not immediately obvious and becomes unimportant.

Realist writers in the genre use their own perspective and that of their participants to create an *illusion* of reality, or verisimilitude. They write to give as comprehensive an account as possible - to make personal accounts count. They seek to describe culturally-inscribed experiences as “fully, complexly and evocatively” (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 85) as possible, providing “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p.10) of a life for the reader. Analytical and critical ethnographers tend to move from story to interpretation and back again, and storytelling is not the focal point of the writing, nor the only form of representation. Theory is not peripheral to the story in these forms but critical to it (Holman-Jones, 2016).

Interestingly, ethnodrama could be considered to straddle the borders between realist and impressionistic ethnography. Viewed by some (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 85) to be a form of realist ethnography, it draws on theatrical techniques of scriptwriting and devising to create performances from participants’ real experiences in “conversation with the researcher’s interpretations of those experiences”. Equally, they can emerge out of the researcher’s own biographical material. Saldana (2003) claims ethnodrama to be “reality-based”, but it also has the means to be developed along very creative and impressionistic lines, drawing on the fiction and artifice of theatrical staging (developed later in Chapter 7).

Arts-based (or arts-informed) representational forms are not discrete categories however and can and do overlap (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015). As the researcher and the writer, it was up to me to explore these forms to find the ‘best fit’ for the story I wanted to tell. As such, I have explored and combined various representational forms to achieve my research intentions of telling the ‘understory’ of the lived experiences of women in management and leadership in HE. To paraphrase Allison (in Llangellier, 1999) one thing I know for sure is that narrative is at the heart of what I am doing and this one certainty

propelled me forwards into experimenting with poetry, short-story and drama, even though the latter was the only one that I originally envisaged when I started out on this journey.

3.8 Ethnodrama – Stories for Script

“Dramatic reconstruction provides a tempting model for re-creating the full three-dimensional richness of observed phenomena”.

(Ackroyd and O’ Toole, 2010, p.xviii)

Qualitative researchers can employ a wide range of “interconnected interpretative methods” (van Son, 2000, p.217) and one such method is ethnodrama. Saldana (2003, 2005, 2011, 2018) defines ethnodrama as the creation of a playscript, consisting of “dramatized (sic), significant sections of narrative collected through interviews, participant observation, field notes, journal entries and/ or print and media artefacts” (Saldana, 2011, p.13). Despite stating that ethnodrama should not be chosen for its novelty value, he still playfully describes it as the data corpus with the all the boring parts taken out (Saldana, 2003). Creative writers need to consider how a tale should best be told, be it through the medium of novel, poetry, theatre, film or television. Likewise, Saldana (2003, 2005, 2011, 2018) urges the qualitative researcher to consider how the participant’s story would be most “credibly, vividly and persuasively” (Warren, 2008) told. That story could be told in any number of ways via the range of arts-based representations, such as story, video or film documentary, photographic exhibition, visual art installation, music, dance, poetry, or ethnodrama. I have chosen to work with poetry, creative non-fiction story and ethnographic playscript – the latter written with a view to representing in ‘embodied’ form as live performance at seminars and conferences by way of dissemination (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7).

I contend that the creation of an ethnodrama is a vivid and credible way to ‘re-tell’ the stories of my participants, and with the staging of that ethnodrama as a theatrical

performance, what Saldana calls ethnotheatre, these stories could be brought to life on stage rather than just appearing as words on paper (Saldana, 2003; Bowman, 2008; Smiegel, 2008). Letting the participants speak directly to the audience in performance creates a vehicle to voice their words out loud, and as such, realise their meaning. Saldana (2014) encourages researchers to “think theatrically” or dramatically and imagine data realised by performance. He considers the dramatic monologue in particular to be like ‘participant portraits’ in miniature, which the researcher’s interpretation cannot better. Ethnodrama is also a means of giving narrative an artistically crafted ‘aesthetic’ shape, which not only adds to the value of the narrative but may help to engage the reader with the material in a more meaningful way (Kim, 2016).

An ethnodramatist can be described as a qualitative researcher playwriting with data. The fields of qualitative research and the theatre arts can sit well together as they both share the common goal of creating engaging insights into the human condition (Saldana, 2003, p. 229). Mienczakowski, Smith and Morgan (2002, p. 34) consider performed data to have an “empathic power” that is missing in other forms of qualitative research representation; it has the power to “construct explanations from within”. Collaborations between the two fields work because there is an almost symbiotic relationship in the constant need for new material on the part of theatre writers and the growing need for impactful dissemination opportunities on the part of social science researchers. High profile ethnographic dramatisations such as *My Name is Rachel Corrie* (Rickman and Viner, 2007), *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2010) and the highly acclaimed verbatim-theatre musical *London Road* (Blythe and Cork, 2011; Julien, 2015) are testament to this symbiosis between the theatre arts and social inquiry.

Ackroyd and O’ Toole (2010) consider ethnodrama to be a marriage of ethnography and drama, and as such see it as a ‘natural love match’, a symbiosis of creativity and social inquiry:

“Ethnographers and anthropologists... are all looking for a way to re-create their discoveries and experiences for others, to replace the traditionally sanctioned way of chronicling

research and its findings in written report or paper with some kind of live performance or re-presentation”.

(Ackroyd and O’ Toole, 2010, p.xvii)

This symbiosis could perhaps imply that all playwrights could be viewed as ethnodramatists and all ethnographers could be viewed as potential playwrights (Saldana, 2003). Both domains share the common goal of offering creative insights into the human condition. Plummer (cited in Hamden, 2012, p. 61) articulates that synergy once again when he states that for narratives to flourish, there needs to be a community to hear, and for communities to hear, there must be stories to weave together. Narrative inquiry in particular uses the basic unit of human communication (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000), the story, to allow for a deeper understanding of our humanity and as such, it perfectly suits ethnodramatic representations, as storytelling is a performative act. Denzin (2014, p. 84-85) tells us that ethnodrama is the single most powerful way for ethnography to recover yet interrogate the meanings of lived experience.

Saldana (1998) reminds me that the artistic choices we make along the way may skew the data and serve to reduce the ‘fidelity’ of the research or negatively impact on the interpretive processes of the audience. And Denzin (2014) considers ethnodrama and personal narrative as ‘messy’ as a consequence - the lines are particularly blurred. The ethnodramatist therefore needs to grapple with ethical issues, including that of the researcher’s positioning, from very early on in the research, unlike in more conventional qualitative research where ethics can often be “relegated” to the last chapter, as if it were “obligatory but irrelevant” (Saldana, 1998). The ethics of dramatised forms of representation pose particular challenges, and the choices made can define the performance paradigm and whether it will speak ‘for’, ‘about’ or ‘with’ a community (Preston, 2009):

“The reality that representations depict the real lives of individuals or groups who may be vulnerable and/or marginalised from the dominant hegemony is an ethical... concern... we

have a responsibility towards ensuring that representations that are made are produced through a climate of sensitivity, dialogue, respect and willingness for reciprocity”.

(Preston, 2009, p. 65)

Bowman (2008) holds that ethnodrama and narrative methodologies can be contentious as there is more to them “than meets the eye” – one can be moved by a story for many reasons, none of which may have anything to do with the performance as research. He contends that what makes for good ethnodrama may not necessarily make for good social inquiry, and vice versa. Artistic choices or the personal bias of the writer/ researcher could result in skewed data for example (Saldana, 2003; 2010; 2018) and hence how the work might be interpreted by the audience. Ethnodrama to be credible demands and assumes honesty. To determine if ethnodrama is the most credible way of telling the participants’ stories, Bowman (2008) suggests that the guideline should simply be what warrants telling and how it can best be told. Dwight et al. (2002, p. 67) remind us that the task of a storyteller is to create a “compelling account that can engage an audience, to give expression to truths within the story that may transcend the “facts” of the case”. The creation of this “compelling” account may require fictionalisations such as the construction of character composites for example and this, in itself, may not be unreasonable (this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7). As Dwight et al. (2002) state, no one could expect a theatre-maker to tell the *whole* story of a research project, that may have taken many months and perhaps even years to complete, in the space of an hour or so of stage time.

In answering Saldana’s (2014) call to performance in that ‘sterile’ conference hall when I was nervously contemplating my own research journey, I keenly anticipated the opportunity to perform. However, the option for performance as part of the research process could not be realised²², and the emphasis moved towards writing an ethnodrama

²² The option for a performance to form part of the assessment was not available to me within the Structured Phd in Education programme at MIC, which only became clear two years into the active research process. As a consequence, I needed to change the direction and emphasis somewhat on the foci of the arts-based methodology.

rather than creating a piece of ethnotheatre, which Saldana (2005, 2011) describes as a theatrically produced, live or mediated performance of an ethnodrama. The impact of this outcome is discussed in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8, but primarily it meant that my focus changed to the process of the interpretation of the narratives through the structuring and writing of both the ethnodrama and the poems and stories that emerged as an unintended consequence rather than through the devising and performance process. But I contend that in all social inquiry there is always uncertainty (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2010), and the adoption of a poststructuralist stance necessitates a certain level of comfort with notions of uncertainty and instability. As Clandinin (2018) states, for narrative inquirers:

“There is always uncertainty. And I think being able to say, there’s not a certain answer here, it could always be otherwise....”

(Clandinin, 2018, p. 5)

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined what Kim (2016) refers to as the *meso* theory underpinning my research methodology, which is narrative inquiry. Story is central to the human quest for understanding the world and our place in the world (Ellis, 2004). Story provides us with a map for that understanding to happen. One of the strengths of narrative inquiry as a research methodology is the importance of techniques such as pattern and configuration to bring order and coherence to narratives of experience (Meyer, 2018; Kim, 2016; Colyar and Holley, 2010; King and Horrocks, 2010; Craig and Huber, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1988). Storytelling provides a lens through which seemingly unconnected and disparate narratives of life experiences can come together to make a coherent whole.

Arts-based research has contributed substantially to changing the landscape of what constitutes qualitative research. More and more, social scientists employ poetic and literary modes of interpretation and representation of research. Arts-based qualitative

research can suggest new ways of looking at the world (Kim, 2016, p. 140 and result in a different kind of meaning-making (Gallagher, Wessels and Yaman Nteilioglou, 2012, p. 26).

I am striving to draw you the reader into this story and offer new ways of seeing and knowing the world the participants inhabit through my ethnographical writing (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) and the arts-based representations that I have created – poetic monologues, creative non-fiction stories and ethnodrama. Saldana (2010; 2018) encourages the qualitative researcher to explore ethnodramatic writing and performance because it is so closely aligned to what we as humans do every day – we tell stories or “monologic vignettes” of some kind each and every day.

In the next chapter, I outline the research design of this study, and ‘enter the field’ to become immersed in story.

Chapter 4 'In the Midst of Stories' - Narrative and Literary Arts-Based Methods

"Ethnography that takes art as its subject makes meaning differently".

(Gallagher, Wessels and Yaman Nteilioglou, 2012, p.26)

4.1 Introduction – Narrative Inquiry as both Methodology and Method

I was now contentedly situated in the midst of Denzin and Lincoln's (2018, p. xiii) community of qualitative researchers, dedicated to the understanding of human experience through storied interpretation (Kim, 2016, p. 5). Feminism values the centrality of personal experience in research. Narrative inquiry therefore aligns well with feminist inquiry as it places personal narratives of experience at the very heart of research.

Chase (2018, p.548) states that it is important that the researcher explain how the "account, object, or performance" they are using is in fact narrative and she suggests that the term should not be used indiscriminately, divesting it of all meaning. According to Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007, p. 150), performative or generative methods in narrative inquiry such as monologues, dialogues or multi-person conversations produce narratives as data. The personal narratives that I have been privileged to hear are those of women who are or have been at some point in their recent career, in positions of academic leadership in the HE sector in Ireland and specifically the IoT sector. I wanted to go beyond the stories that are usually told in the gender inequality discourse to look beneath the surface of these grand narratives. It can be easy to look at the big stories currently in the spotlight (UN's HeForShe campaign; #MeToo; #BelieveHer; #timesup; Gender Pay Gap). However, it is harder to look at the prosaic, the everyday, the greyer areas of what happens in our immediate lives such as at home or in the day-to-day environs of the workplace for example. Black, Crimmins and Henderson (2019, p. 538) on their shared writing project exploring their professional and personal identities as female academics hold that it is important to "tune into the

everydayness that makes up our being” (italics mine). Allison (cited in Langellier, 1999, p. 3) speaks about the notion that behind the stories that are told are the ones that aren’t.

I wanted to loosen the threads of the “taken-for-granted” understandings and representations of knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.79), to unravel the lived stories of women’s career and personal lives (Pilcher and Coffey, 1996). I also wanted to explore my own understandings of our shared experiences, co-constructing with the participants the ‘understory’ of women in academic leadership by “living, telling and retelling” (Clandinin and Connolly, p.71) the participants’ stories so that I could perhaps also “catch sight of myself” (Kim, 2016, p. 239) and come to a better understanding of my own.

Ellis (2004, p.32) holds that story is so fundamental to human existence that it should be viewed as both a method and a subject, a process and a product, in social sciences research. It is my personal experience of being a female in the role of Head of Department in an IoT for the last ten years or more as I have lived it and the sharing of those experiences as I do on an almost daily basis with females in similar roles that has brought me to this study and to the use of narrative inquiry as both methodology (the study of experience as narrative) and method (a narrative approach to gathering the ‘data’).

4.2 A Narrative Inquirer in the Field

4.2.1 The Participants

The participants were selected using homogeneous, purposeful sampling. I set out to explore the daily lived experiences of female academic Heads of Department in HE in Ireland. Therefore my focus was on a specific group with shared characteristic(s) which were core to the purposes of my research (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000). As relatedness is central to the narrative inquiry methodology (Craig and Huber, 2008; Josellson, 2007; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000) the participants were all known to me via a professional network of female colleagues in IoT (Institute of Technology) management and leadership that I had built up during my years in the role myself. The strategy of working

with women in the same sector as myself and with whom I had a previous relationship was one which was carefully teased out with my supervisor. Aside from the centrality of relationship to the narrative inquiry process, the homogeneous sampling would open up avenues for storying that might not arise if I were to include participants who were in the university sector, due to the very different practices that pertain (see section 2.1), with particular reference to how academic roles are differentiated, the nature of academic recruitment and employment contracts, the highly unionised organisational culture and the impact of new-managerialism on these practices with specific reference to the IoT sector (Loxley, Seery and Walsh, 2014, p. 126). Furthermore, the IoT sector was also experiencing the 'pull' factor (Hinfelaar, 2012) of the post-Hunt merger processes, which gave rise to particular endemic conflict within these institutions that would not have been a feature of the university sector at that time.

Kim (2016, p. 161) states that despite much debate on the issue, there has been no agreement in the qualitative research community on what is considered to be the optimal sample size and cites Beitin (2012, cited in Kim, 2016, p. 161) who suggests it could "range from 6 to 12 participants, provided there is thematic redundancy after 6 interview participants". Kim (2016) herself states that if the interviews are for the purposes of gathering data on life experiences, the sample can be smaller and the interviews longer. In the end, I worked with six women, all female senior academic staff within the IoT sector (defined as Senior Lecturing Grades S1, S2, S3 in the annual series of HEA Institutional Reviews up to 2018) all of whom were interviewed twice, with the exception of one.

I approached each of the participants individually either face-to-face or over the phone, and once they expressed a willingness to participate, I forwarded in advance the Participant Information Sheet and Consent form (see Appendices). This was followed up with an interview date and time if they were agreeable. Throughout this research, I have assigned the participants *nom-de-plumes* to protect their identities (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 The Participants

Jane (mid-40s) was an academic Head of Department in her HE organisation for over six years at the time of her interviews. Prior to that, she lectured in the Department for a number of years but had availed of secondment periods from her teaching to work in college administration. She has since moved to an administrative managerial role.

April (mid-50s) spent two years as an academic Head of Department in her organisation. She had held a senior lecturing post prior to taking up the head role and left both the role and the organisation to take up a senior lecturing job in another HE abroad, one year prior to when the interviews were conducted.

Molly (early 40s) had been an academic Head of Department in her HE organisation for four years at the time of her first interview. She was a lecturer prior to taking up the role and changed role between interviews to take up a non-academic management role in the same organisation.

Francis (late-50s) was retired two years at the time of her first interview. She spent over a decade as an academic Head of Department in her HE organisation, followed by a number of years as a senior manager on her Institute's executive team. Prior to taking up these management roles, Francis had been a lecturer in her department for a number of years.

Julie (early 50s) applied for the role after a long number of years as a lecturer in her HE organisation. She served as an academic Head of Department for four years, after which she returned to lecturing within her department (at the time of her first interview). She has since left her organisation to take up a senior management post outside of the HE sector.

Deirdre (early 50s) is currently an academic Head of Department in her HE organisation. She was a lecturer in her department for many years prior to taking up the role and went for the role on at least one occasion prior to succeeding. This is currently her fifth year serving in the role.

It might be pertinent at this point to address the homogeneity of the sample and whether this served the best purposes of the research. In the annualised Institutional Profiles collated by the HEA, the data collected on staffing, and which is nationally available, covers a limited number of factors including i) the nature of the employment contract (permanent core staff, contract staff or research staff) ii) the age profile and iii) the gender profile, which

is itself limited to the 'proportion of Academic Staff who are female' and 'the proportion of Senior Academic Staff who are female'.

As can be noted in Table 4.1, the participants were either mid-career or late career academics. At the time of the interviews, I was a mid-career academic myself, as I was late into the sector. In the latest available data set for the academic year 2018/19 (HEA, 2021a) 71% of all staff are over the age of 40, with 49% between 40 and 54. Furthermore, applying for a Head of Department role within the IoT sector is a promotion to a Senior Lecturer grade, which it would not be unreasonable to assume would require some prior career experience to bring to the table, either within or without the sector. In an as yet unpublished Phd study on a national survey of Heads of Department (Meagher), two thirds of the respondents to the survey were recorded as males, and the overwhelming majority of these were aged between 40 and 59 years. In terms of age profile therefore, the purposeful sample can be considered to be reasonably representative.

In terms of the diversity of the sample, as noted above, a very limited amount of nationally collated data is currently available. The HEA only recently made available the results of a national survey of all HEI's on race and ethnicity (HEA, 2021), prompted by the Athena Swan Intersectionality Working Group (HEA, 2021, p. 2), so this information was not available to me at the time of my data collection. The results show however that the largest group (72%) of respondents self-report as White Irish, with another fifth (17.5%) describing themselves as Whiter Other. And it is important to note that this data is gathered across all staff (including professional/ services and all academic). Clearly there is work to do going forward to redress this imbalance but at the time of my research, this was not a factor that I could take account of, nor emerged in the narrative interviewing process.

Furthermore, information on gender identity, social class or 'relational' aspects of our lives such as our care responsibilities is not collated or available either, and as such, these aspects of our lived experience continue to remain invisible (Lynch et al. 2020, p. 159). The issue of care responsibilities arose in the narrative interviews, as did the personal, relational aspects in terms of support at home, but that of gender identity did not, nor social class.

Interestingly, the author bell hooks in her piece on bonding across boundaries within the feminist movement (hooks, 2012, p. 143 - 144) considers “race and gender boundaries easier to surmount than class” despite that fact that as she put it “most of us were raised to believe that class does not matter in a democratic society”. I am from a working-class background myself, but at the time of the data collection, did not see that as something I could feel confident discussing due to the lack of data available in this space, nor did I feel that I needed to raise it for myself. The issue of being a lone parent however in terms of care responsibilities and the additional burden that is shouldered by those of us parenting alone in the sector (Lynch et al., 2020, p. 165) in general did come up for me and I address that in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.2.2 The Interviews

The location for each of the interviews varied from a participant’s homeplace in one case to a private office space for the most part, either mine or the participant’s. Only one interview took place in an alternative setting and this is described in Chapter 5 (April’s Story). The need to maintain confidentiality was to the fore at all times in terms of all interview parameters, including location.

As I was a novice preparing go “into the field” (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000) as a narrative inquirer, I had prepared a list of possible questions or topics to help lead the discussions (see Appendix 5), which were informed primarily by my reading to date in the area of women in HE leadership and management (see Chapter 2), but also by my own experiences in the role. However, I found that in fact I did not actually use these prompt questions, as described below in 4.2.3. With the comfort of a first interview with a colleague with whom I had a very strong and well-established professional relationship going back many years, I was able to leave any attempt to direct these interviews behind me.

I endeavoured to allow the interviews to take the course that the participant chose to go with them, and as discussed above, guiding them only in the sense that I was looking for

both stories of experiences that resonated with my own whilst remaining keenly open to divergences and new experiences as well. I interjected where that resonance or divergence was sparked so that together we could co-construct a bigger story. Emerging from what Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007) refer to as a 'bricolage' of my self-conceptions in the moment and place of the interviews themselves, some of my own stories I shared with the participant at the time of the interview, others I held onto but revisited through the process of working with the transcripts. I was comfortable sharing my stories for the most part and in this regard, I worked to combat any power asymmetry (Rosenblatt, 2012; Trinh, 2012) that can come with interview as method.

Some of the stories took me to unexpected places and induced a response from me that I didn't wish to share at the time – like an inner voice in my head reacting to something that had been said, creating a brief feeling of tension (Craig & Huber, 2007) and distraction as the participant continued with her story. I recall reacting to one interviewee's story as she spoke about positive comments she had received from her staff at a leaving lunch when she was stepping out of the managerial role. My inner voice suddenly asked myself if I could recall receiving a compliment like this and if not, why not and would I ever? There were also other times where I have come away from an interview inspired by the academic and personal achievements of the participants, and one in particular where I simply wrote down afterwards that I wanted to be more like her. There were also some stories that I shared in the interview engagements but could not bring into the dissertation due to reasons of confidentiality as I am clearly identifiable, and thus other players in my story may therefore be similarly identifiable. However, these stories naturally came out in the interviews and while I could not use them as data, they found their way into the research by virtue of the response that they engendered in the interviewees and the stories that were co-constructed as a result.

The interviews were recorded apart from one which was the result of a malfunction in the recording device on the day (April) and as the participant had travelled some distance specifically to meet with me, I continued with the interview and took notes. The recorded interviews were uploaded from the recording device onto my own personal computer,

which is password protected, and which is never taken outside of my own home. These recordings were then transcribed. At the point at which I made that decision, I was only thinking of transcription as a means of keeping a record of the research interviews. It was only later in the research process after I had read further into arts-based research representations and examples of verbatim and transcript being used in playscripts (Saldana, 2005; Davis, 2017) in particular, that I decided I wanted to use the words as they were spoken for the purposes of the ethnodrama (discussed in more detail in Chapters 7). The interviews varied in length from anything between 40 to 70 mins. Each participant was interviewed twice²³, apart from April who was interviewed on just one occasion. The transcripts and hand-written notes, along with the original recordings, constituted my field texts.

4.2.3 Learning to create 'Room to Speak'

"Interviewing is no longer reserved for social researchers or investigative reporters but has become the very stuff of life as members of society spend much of their time asking questions, being asked questions themselves or watching tv shows about people being asked questions and answering them in turn. They all seem to have routine knowledge of the rules of interviewing with no need for instruction".

(Fontana, 2002, p.161)

Narrative research is difficult and "how to go about it is much discussed" (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013, p. 1). There was undoubtedly trepidation on my part when I started to meet with the participants. The biggest fear for me was letting go of the need to have a pre-prepared list of leading questions as I would have had in a semi-structured interview engagement, of which I had previous and not insubstantial experience. All the participants

²³ Data collection December 2015 – April 2017

were women with whom I had worked in the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector as Heads of Department, so my biggest fear was letting myself down amongst my peers²⁴.

For my first interview I chose to meet with Francis, a participant with whom I had a very well-developed professional relationship for a number of years (I discuss the complications associated with prior relationships below). I adopted this strategy to forge what I thought would be an 'easing' of myself into the data collection phase precisely because we have such a strong relationship built up over a number of years, as relationship is "the nexus of what narrative inquirers do" (Craig and Huber, 2007, p. 255). I worked initially from the prepared talking points, which I had in a word document open on a laptop on the table between us (Appendix 5). Johnson (2002) talks about researchers having a stock of common sense or 'member-based knowledge' to work from and the questions in this table were informed by a combination of my own experiences in the role, along with the pertinent literature. However, I also remember writing these questions down as ones I would want someone to ask me if the tables were turned and I was the researched rather than the researcher. While I did not fully appreciate how my own experiences and biases were impacting on the research (Jenoure, 2002, p.80), at this very early juncture, it is clear to me now that my own 'stock of knowledge' (Johnson, 2002) and experiences (good and not so good) in the role influenced my initial approach to the interviews. I refer in particular to the quote that I highlighted from Lord and Preston (2009) in these early preparatory notes:

"There was a mutual interest in feminist research and an interest in leadership experience... (t)his led the initial conversations regarding the experience of moving into and settling in a leadership role as well as intense conversation about the need to 'survive' "

Lord and Preston (2009., p. 771)

²⁴ In the early stages preparing for the data collection phase, I made preliminary approaches with two female managers from the university sector, for whom I had received referrals, but in consultation with my supervisor, as I had no prior relationship with these women, I did not pursue this line of inquiry.

The word '*survive*' resonated strongly with me because that is how I had felt in those first few years, like I was just surviving, keeping my head above water. I wanted to find out if I was alone in that.

Clandinin and Rosiek (2007, p. 37) observe that "narrative inquirers study experience". Over the last decade or so, interviews have been perceived more as collaborations or sites "for the genuine sharing of experiences" (Adkinson and Coffee, 2002, p.811) rather than as artificial engagements with what the authors refer to as the potential for contamination by unequal relationships between the researcher and the researched. I approached the interviews wanting to hear the individual's own experiences and I would like to think that I got better at providing the space to hear the stories that emerged as I became more practised. In any epistemology, interviewees need to be given "room to speak" (Czarniawska, 2007, p.390) and one of the biggest tasks for a novice interviewer is to learn to listen deeply (Johnson, 2002, p. 106) and with patience and respect (Denzin, 2002, p. 845). Gubrium and Holstein (2008, p. 256) also discuss the need for the interviewer to acquire the skills necessary to activate narrative production; "(p)eople seldom just "burst out" with stories. It takes work". In this very first interview, when I listen back to the taped recording, I find myself interjecting more than I would like, almost interrupting the interviewee's story and her train of thought, particularly at the beginning as I checked in on my prompts.

I did find the confidence to give more space for stories to emerge as the interview with the participants progressed, as I was beginning to understand narrative inquiry as a study of *experience as story* (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000) and story as a way of *thinking about that experience*. Looking back now on the interview phase, I resonate strongly with Katz' (1998) recollection of how he "changed the focus of (the) observations and interview questions in *innumerable, unrecorded moves*" (Katz, 1998, p.128, italics mine). In some cases I did ask questions that encompassed the topics in the prompts in my pre-prepared notes, but in

others I told stories of my own experiences around these topics and this drew out the participant's stories, or her recollections drew out mine²⁵.

Francis had retired as a senior member of her management team two years prior. She used this interview space to reminisce over her career, which spanned nearly 40 years in the HE sector in Ireland. At the end of the interview she talked about how much she had really enjoyed it as she had the opportunity to articulate to herself as much as to me her successes and achievements during that career lifetime – as she said herself, the interview had brought her “*back the road*”. The ‘re-telling’ had shed light and brought new understanding for her (Kim, 2016; Clandinin, 2007; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000). I recall feeling very heartened and encouraged by the fact that she recognised and appreciated the opportunity the interview had given her in this regard. She also seemed to take the opportunity to re-examine events that were not in her view as positive and review these from the safe distance that the intervening years allowed. She had also come prepared with some thoughts that she had ‘jotted down’ but the flow of conversation was such that in the time allotted, neither of us referred to these notes, nor felt the need to even at the end.

As the interview schedule progressed, my confidence grew to the extent that I approached each engagement with an openness to ‘experiencing’ the experience (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 80) by moving away from the pre-prepared prompts, and just trying to encourage each participant to tell of her experiences from when she applied for Head of Department role, her experiences of being in the role and how those experiences have changed after the role, or since if still in the role. I had the opening gambit almost reduced down to a single sentence which would elicit a narrative response (Wengraf, 2001, p. 113) starting with ‘*Tell my why/ when you went for the role...*’ or more simply ‘*Tell me how you got here*’. While the transcripts of the interviews I have conducted do not in any way resemble the extremes of ‘a-single-question-minimum-further-intervention’ approach that Wengraf (2011) discusses in some detail, I did learn to trust myself with just the one starting

²⁵ My own contributions (that can be recorded as data) are evident in the stories but in the poems my contributions are italicised. This is discussed in Section 4.3.

question, growing more confident that the rest would flow from there. I was able to do that because I had the depth of experience in the role myself to call on - I had a stock of 'member-based knowledge' (Johnson, 2012) to work from - and the strength of the established relationships that I had with the participants.

4.2.4 'Coming to Know' through Relationship

I found the interview process to be a very enjoyable and engaging experience for me. What I enjoyed most was the ease with which the participants spoke about themselves and their daily working lives. From the minute we entered the same interview space together, be it me entering their physical space or vice versa, the conversation commenced as it normally does where there had been a previously established relationship between myself and the participant. In these cases, as a consequence of that established relationship and rapport, the point at which I began to formally record the session became arbitrary. The experience started the moment we came together in the room. There was no sense that we needed to spend time putting each other at ease beyond the important ethical formalities (Kim, 2016; Farrimond, 2013; Aull-Davies, 2008; Josellson, 2007) of re-iterating the purpose of the research and reconfirming the confidentiality / anonymity of all material gathered. The ending of the interviews was the same - a blurring of lines between what was formally being captured as part of the 'research' and what would normally end a conversation between us.

Just as I was beginning to understand narrative inquiry as storied experience, I was also beginning to appreciate that relationships are the nexus of a narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000; Josellson, 2007). Craig and Huber (2007) use the notion of 'coming to know' through relationship. Having a prior relationship with the participants turned the interview experience from a 'data gathering' exercise into something much more complex. By virtue of the relationship that pre-existed, the stories that have been shared and co-created have gone beyond a mere chronological or event-driven retelling of career lives.

Kim (2016, p. 162) talks about trust and rapport as being the most important aspects of the narrative interview method. To generate new knowledge through the process of the interview, we must build a rapport so that we can rely on the interviewee to engage openly, honestly and with “generosity.” The existence of these prior relationships with my co-participants focussed my attention as researcher on the role of friendship in building rapport and maintaining trust. We have worked in the same role in a branch of the HE sector in Ireland (IoT sector) that is highly regulated, strongly unionised (Loxley, in Loxley, Seery and Walsh, 2014) and relatively closely networked, so our working experiences are strikingly similar. We can therefore engage as colleagues about familiar situations that expose our respective weaknesses as well as our strengths to each other. We have knowledge and ‘sight of’ each other as a starting point to work from. Clandinin & Connelly (1998) go so far as to suggest that relationship as friendship “implies a sharing, an interpenetration of two or more persons’ spheres of experience” (Clandinin and Connolly, 1998, p. 281, cited in Craig & Huber, 2007). It is that *interpenetration* that defines the narrative inquiry process for me due to these prior established relationships and which created that space for deeper exploration which allowed me to “pay attention to the participants’ feelings, understandings or dilemmas” (Kim, 2016, p. 207) and to pick up on certain events that had a strong impact on their lives, whether professional and personal.

But what of the dangers of “over-rapport”, where the relationship between researcher and researched may be perceived as being too close (Kim, 2016, p. 162), perhaps with too much *interpenetration*, a situation which might conceivably create bias and distort the purposes of the interview and the objectives of the research. Citing Goudy and Potter (1975, in Kim, 2016, p. 162), Kim posits that the purpose of the research is not about building a rapport “in and of itself” but *using and building* on that rapport to excavate stories and create new knowledge. Rapport can only emerge from relationship and that relationship needs to be both developed and maintained with the awareness that they can never be static and are necessarily subject to constant negotiation and renegotiation throughout every stage of the research. Furthermore, relationships evolve not only over the life of the research but even within the duration of a single interview exchange. With prior established relationships we

were able to get down to the objectives or ‘business end’ of the research itself relatively quickly, without the need to pedal backwards, as it were, to get the measure of each other first. Furthermore, it would have been foolhardy and naïve of me to assume that the work of relationship-building was over and done with and I had nothing more to do in that regard. That would have been a fatal hubris – any one of these prior relationships could have turned on a simple misunderstanding or as a result of over-invasive questioning or being insensitive to, and cavalier with, the participant’s feelings. I worked at maintaining that rapport over the course of the interviews through a process of negotiation and renegotiation, the kind that happens in innumerable small and almost imperceptible steps when human beings interact with each other. In the end, according to Kim (2016, p. 163), caring for our participants and maintaining respect for their dignity and integrity are central to the notions of trust-building and rapport in narrative inquiry.

4.2.5 ‘As much about self as other’

The interview exchanges with the participants were “as much about self as well as other” (Warren, 2002, p.97). The original research objective was to use these story-sharing exchanges as ‘data’ to devise an ethnodrama (for a solo performance) which would tell the ‘understory’ of life as a female Head of Department in the HE (IoT) sector in Ireland. Underneath the surface was a desire to unveil myself to myself, to come to an understanding about my own story by story-sharing with other women who had similar experiences to my own. I was looking for stories with which I could resonate and in which I could “catch sight of myself” (Kim, 2016, p. 239), as well as being open to new stories, new experiences. The stories that have been shared by the participants during the interviews evoked my own stories, they poked and prodded at my own memories and rather like an ultrasonic image, they helped me develop a three-dimensional shape for the composite character I had set out to create for a solo performance. The desire for resonance was deliberate for the purposes of the ethnodrama, especially for performance - I wanted to be able to relate to the stories to better perform them. To write for performance, to breathe

life (Warren, 2008i) into the experiences of my participants, to tell the *'understory'* of women in management and leadership in HE, I knew that I needed to be able to come to know myself and more importantly, to be able to tell my own story first (Saldana, 2011).

However, just because I was looking for resonance does not mean that I ignored or passed over those experiences which I did not recognise. I listened too for those divergences and found space to explore them in the same way as I explored the convergences. I was keenly aware of the need to balance my own story with those of the participants throughout.

4.3 'Sense-making'

Kim (2016, p. 155) uses the term "excavating stories" to describe the process of collecting and analysing the 'data' in narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 63) refer to this phase as being "in the midst" of stories, reminding us to "experience the experience" because narrative inquiry is "a form of living, a way of life" (p. 78). Clandinin (2007, p. 247) cautions that it is too easy to treat stories as something that can be "picked up", categorised and written down, too easy to lose sight of the objective of narrative inquiry which is to understand and make meaning from experience.

In this section, I recall being "in a place of stories" (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 80) and explore the processes of sense-making and coming to a new understanding of the participants' living stories. I explore also the issues and challenges that arose for me and the complexities and ambiguities of being a narrative inquirer in the field.

4.3.1 'Flirting' with the data

Hollingsworth and Dybdahl (2007, p. 153) examine the critical role of conversation in narrative inquiry. There is something to be learned from conversation and that it is up to the researcher to "make sense of the talk" (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007, p. 153). That is the challenge that faced me as I worked with the transcripts and hand-written notes and

how I could go from these to an ethnographic playscript that I could conceivably perform. I needed to find a way to move towards an understanding of the social and cultural narratives that are embedded in these co-constructed stories by delving into the field material. Warren (2002, p. 83) notes that the purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondents talk. The researcher listens for the *meaning* of what is being conveyed in the interviews which can provide “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p.10) of a social world which can then analysed for cultural patterns (Warren, 2002, p.85).

The derivation of meaning from personal narrative can be undertaken from a variety of perspectives - textually, culturally, conversationally, politically, historically, and performatively (Kim, 2016; Squire et al., 2013; Reissman, 2008, 2002; Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Baumann, 1986; Llangelier, 1999). Should personal narrative be ‘interrogated’ however, or just understood as simple evidence, to be affirmed and ‘honoured’? To turn away completely from analysis and to let the text ‘speak for itself’ could render the methodology open to criticism as lacking credibility (Kim, 2016) with an ‘anything goes’ school of thought (Barone & Eisner, 2012) or conversely, one which inadvertently sanctifies personal experience, rendering the narratives almost ‘sacred’ and exempt from critique. From a postmodern, poststructural perspective, my quest is to unearth multiple ‘truths’ rather than a search for one unmediated truth. As experience-centred inquiry (Squire, 2013) the objective is not the verification of the facts of the events recounted in these personal narratives; rather it is the understanding of the meanings of the events for those involved.

Subjectivity and positioning are central to working with narratives in this perspective, as is the location of narrative events in a socio-cultural context. The ‘interpretation’ rather than ‘interrogation’ of narratives should provide a broad enough canvas for the re-formations and re-creations of our past (Gough, 2003; Mischler, 1986). Narratives interpret the past in the stories rather than reproduce the past as it was. Interpretation of narratives can still encourage the reader to go beyond the text (Reissman, 2008) and draw inferences about a social process. Interpretation in qualitative inquiry can fulfil the same function that rigorous

analysis and empirical interrogation do in the positivistic model, in a manner more fitting the qualitative paradigm (see Chapter 3). According to Kim (2016, p. 189) in narrative inquiry in particular, analysis and interpretation work in tandem with each other, because to analyse narrative data is to develop an understanding of the meanings that participants give their stories, and consequently, themselves and their surroundings. Narrative analysis and interpretation therefore together provide a mechanism for meaning-making in narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016, p. 190). Drawing on Polkinghorne (in Kim, 2016, p. 190), Kim concludes that the derivation of narrative meaning can never be anything but problematic because meaning itself is intangible and “not easily grasped”, the analysis of it uncertain and imprecise, and we can never have direct access to other people’s intentional meanings as “we are at the mercy of the storyteller’s recollection or introspection” (Kim, 2016., p. 190).

4.3.2 The Interpretive Process

The very first interpretive process is that of transcription (Gough, 2003). Transcription is generally defined as a process of representing the sounds of speech in a textual, symbolic (phonetic) manner. We cannot reproduce past events with any level of accuracy in our storytelling – our stories do not ‘mirror’ the world as lived because our stories are remembered and relived retrospectively. The act of storytelling is a performance, a recreation of past events, and an exact reproduction of the act of storying itself (the speech act) is not possible. Therefore, according to Gough (2003), at best we can reproduce it as closely as possible by finding textual ways to describe the physical nuances of human communication – pauses, stresses, gestures, for example. Therefore the act of transcription is an interpretive practice underpinned by the researcher’s assumptions and biases and is always partial; we make decisions on what to include and what to exclude, what to highlight and what to diminish, depending on our epistemological and ontological positioning as researchers. It follows then that the very first subjective, interpretive act that we make when working with narrative is the act of transcription, and therefore it becomes a part of

the inquiry process. To engage with the transcripts as part of the process of meaning-making is a second, interpretive and hence subjective, act.

The interviews were transcribed without the use of the myriad software that is more readily available today. It was done by a process of simply listening, writing down, rewinding and replaying. I found the first pass at interpreting the transcripts and hand-written notes to be messy, both personally and textually. I think early drafts of any form of a creative writing exercise can be raw and roughly-hewn, as the main drive is to get thoughts down on paper with no particular care for readability, presentation or focus. For me, everything started with reviewing the hand-written notes or re-reading the interview transcripts as I played back the recordings, and what followed then was an endless process of drafting and editing as I explored a variety of ways of working with and presenting the data. I wanted to find a way to move the transcripts and hand-written notes into the dissertation in a creative and artistically engaging manner, one that would let each participant's stories and therefore the bricolage of my own story, come to life on the page. Kim (2016, p. 185) uses the term 'flirting' with data to describe the process of transforming 'messy' transcripts and hand-written notes into meaningful stories. She describes the concept of such 'flirtation' as being that of setting aside what we already know, questioning its legitimacy and orthodoxy, and instead opening ourselves up to what we do not, or rather cannot, know before we conduct the research:

"Flirting with ideas allows us to dwell on what is unconvincing, uncertain, and perplexing, rendering surprises and serendipities, and of course, disappointments as well".

(Kim, 2016, p. 187)

4.3.3 Narrative Smoothing

Kim (2016, p. 192) examines the "necessary" process of *narrative smoothing* as one which narrative researchers use to make participant stories "coherent, engaging and interesting to the reader". It allows us to engage in a form of subjective interpretation which allows

researchers to write a “good” story rather than a strictly “faithful” account and is described as “brushing off the rough edges of disconnected raw data”. There are clearly ethical issues with *narrative smoothing* due to the subjective nature of the processes of selection – whether that refers to the selection of what to include, what to omit or even what is or isn’t meaningful data. However, I contend that the same problems pertain in any form of research reporting, in any paradigm, as the asymmetrical power relationship between researcher and researched is such that the power will always reside with the researcher with respect to the analysis, interpretation and reporting processes, and selections will always be made to serve the purposes of the research. It is, however, critical to ethical social inquiry to be transparent about those decisions and to declare the biases and subjectivities involved.

Drawing on Josellson (2004, in Kim 2016, p. 193) Kim discusses the dual notions of ‘*interpretations of faith*’ and ‘*interpretations of suspicion*’, which are not mutually exclusive. The former rests on our acceptance of our participants’ stories as being faithful and meaningful to *their* personal and subjective experiences while the latter refers to the adoption of a stance which compels us to dig deeper, to question the ‘taken for granted’ and to “demystify” the implicit meanings that perhaps might go unnoticed otherwise. Furthermore, interpretations themselves are not static, but are fluid and evolving – at best we can provide for the reader an interpretation (from a particular worldview and viewed through a specific analytical lens) at a particular point in time and no more. Any temporal shift could and should result in a different interpretation and hence a different ‘retelling’ of the research story to the reader.

I undertook a two-phased process to bring the transcripts and hand-written notes to life as creatively interpreted ‘storied worlds’ of the participants and from there into the form of a playscript, described below.

4.3.3.1 Phase 1 Extracting Stories from the Data – Analysis of Narratives

Reissman (2002; 2008) considers transcriptions of taped conversations and constructed notes of interviews to straddle a border between speech and writing; a two-dimensional representation of a dialogical exchange. Human conversation is dynamic, fluid, non-linear, disordered. Transcribing dynamic talk into coherent, cogent, linear text is neither easy nor straightforward and, she contends like Gough (2003) that it is a deeply interpretive process. Personal narrative involves large sections of dialogical exchange, and the storying of events tends to be embedded and intertwined in these exchanges in research interviews. As a result, stories in research interviews tend not to have clearly identified boundaries and in narrative inquiry, there can be a deep interpenetration of this story-telling exchange between teller and listener, with the added complication of these roles interchanging, being fluid and dynamic throughout the interview. This differs from the act of narration itself which can be distinguished by the acts of ordering and sequencing - one action is viewed as consequential to the next (Chase, 2018).

In other words, narrators create plots from disordered, non-chronologically recalled experiences, giving reality a “unified, coherent form neither nature nor the past possess so clearly” (Reissman, 2002, p.698). Temporal ordering of plot is the most familiar, but there are other techniques for holding plot together, such as thematically or episodically and it is the latter that I used to impose a first structure on the participant narratives. I commenced by reorganising the transcriptions and notes into sequences connecting episodes which were loosely categorised around the following core episodes (Ellis & Brochner, 1992; Saldana, 2006, 2003, 2010) which seemed to appear in the participant narratives to differing extents:

Box 4.1 – Episodes

An introduction to the character
Early days in the role
The demands of the role/ 'busy-ness'
Interpersonal demands/ Women's way of working
Organisational culture and power
Being a woman in the role

At this early juncture, I was drawing loosely on Polkinghorne's (1995) **paradigmatic mode of analysis (of narratives)**, arranging the interview material around episodes that appeared common across the participants' stories, inductively gleaned from the data as I read and re-read them. Rogers, Frellick and Babinski (2002, p, 66) conclude that script construction in ethnodrama is not much different from conventional qualitative analysis – central themes are identified in the data and are extracted and reconstructed to 'illustrate' findings; "the task of selecting and presenting data through a play ... is... a natural extension of the research process". Like Saldana (2006), my method of 'extracting' from the data has been gleaned from various experiences of working with qualitative material in my earlier career.²⁶ It is important to note at this juncture that the processes of scripting the play and of data interpretation took place contemporaneously as I was singularly focussed on working towards the construction of a playscript at this point in my research journey. The early data interpretation phase provided me with a means to engage with myself as a novice ethnodramatist as I began to identify images and story strands out of which composites (both character and story) might emerge, in order to create a coherent telling of the story.

Blumenfeld-Jones (2002, p. 95) considers himself to work "scatteredly" – he thinks of images, he presents himself with these images and then 'sees' what strikes him, "what

²⁶ Early career experiences as a Research Assistant in an educational research centre in a college of education in Dublin, a post-graduate research student in TCD and an independent consultant working on programme evaluations before I commenced in my current role.

seems to have the potential to go somewhere". I followed a similar path. Working through the transcripts and hand-written notes of the participant interviews, listening back to the recordings, I began to collate and catalogue 'triggers' or 'flash-point' recollections that resonated with me and identified word images (stimuli) or story strands that I could use in the scripting process. The lived experiences within the narratives were then later viewed through a more articulated feminist (postmodern, poststructural) lens of 'Otherness', 'Power' and 'Care, Caring & Connectedness' (outlined in Chapter 2) into which the 'episodes' loosely fitted and so this table was developed and refined further and used to identify vignettes for the ethnodrama. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 but an extract is presented here to give a sense of the direction that I was taking in the early stage of data interpretation. The full table is available to view in Appendix 2.

Table 4.2 Sample Extracts from Field Texts (Interview Transcripts, Recorded Notes and Recordings):

<p>Excerpts from interview texts (numbers identify the interviewee/ recording to the researcher; text in bold specifically resonates with me and corroborates my own experiences or prompts me to remember a different experience to the interviewee).</p>	<p>Feminist Lens of Inquiry</p>
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<p>Box 1 - Becoming</p> <p>I never wanted to be a Head as such (1)</p> <p>I didn't actually have the qualifications; I had the academic qualifications, but I didn't have the experience. (6)</p> <p>I hadn't anticipated that I would get the role because I felt there were a number of (hesitates) shortcomings in my application.... (3). I never held a management position... I was never trained to be a manager.</p> <p>When I went for the interview for this job, I really didn't expect that I was going to get it. I felt that I wasn't really ... ready for the job? I am still working on that. My knowledge and my competence and my confidence has improved a lot over the years. (3)</p> <p>I never had any interest in it. I actually felt guilty because there wasn't any headship at the time... I sat down for a coffee with my boss.... I wasn't guilty</p>	<p>Female as 'lack' / 'deficit' / 'negative coefficient' to the male.</p> <p>Hesitation/ doubt – 'lack' of public voice for women, 'lack' of self-confidence.</p> <p>Feeling guilty, responsible for everything. Female imperative to care.</p>
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<p>into it but I suppose I do tend to feel guilty about things that happen...</p> <p>But maybe I was testing myself... could I do that? Maybe there was a bit of me that wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. (4) Ego. Hard to accept now that is why I did it.</p> <p>I thought I could help shape things (0)</p> <p>I wanted to be taken seriously (0), have a voice at the table.</p>	<p>Not living up to expectations of patriarchal system.</p> <p>Desire to 'lean in', go for position of power. Women not socialised into seeking power.</p> <p>Measuring up to the 'male' standard, being moulded by others instead of the one doing the moulding.</p> <p>Private vs Public Voice. Public (male sphere) voice is the one that counts.</p>
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4.3.3.2 Phase 2 Creating Experiences – Narrative Analysis

Narratives don't just *recount* past experiences but *create* experiences for their audiences (Reissmann, 2002; 2008). The teller makes the telling of the experience the experience of the listener (Llangellier, 1999). Given the relationship between oral literature and social life, Baumann (1986) contends that narrative is 'doubly anchored' in human events, because they are at the same time both the events in which they are told and the events that they recount – what Bauman refers to as “toward narrative events and narrated events” (Baumann, 1986, p.6). The oral storyteller takes what she/he tells from her/his experience and makes it the experience of others. A story therefore involves a story-telling experience which is a reciprocal event between a teller and an audience. The telling of it intervenes or mediates between personal experience and the story. Personal narrative is

performed in the speech act itself in the words – ‘*let me tell you a story*’ or ‘*can you tell me your story?*’ Narrative mediates experience and performance intervenes between experience and story. As we tell stories about our life, we therefore perform our identities (Llangellier, 1999).

These interview transcripts and hand-written notes were two dimensional (Reissman, 2002) records of performances of personal identities, revealing personal truths about deeply human experiences. Rather than analysing and breaking down these experiences into units of ‘data’ – fragmented, depersonalised and disjointed – I wanted to capture the *essence* of these performances, or the storytelling experiences (Baumann, 1986, p.7) as an interpretive, ethnographical performance, what Baumann refers to as a verbal art, a way of speaking or a mode of communication. The teller conveys what they want to be known, and how they want to be seen, by the stories they develop collaboratively with their audience.

Polkinghorne’s (1995, p. 15) **narrative mode of analysis** attends to the human richness of a story – it seeks to configure data into a coherent whole in a way that allows the reader to empathise with the story-teller and highlights the significance of the lived story that is being told. It focuses on events and happenings and emplots them by filling in the gaps using a narrative smoothing process. Kim (2016, p. 198) tells us that Polkinghorne’s concept of narrative analysis provides a vehicle to remain true to the data while bringing new narrative meanings to the fore which are not explicit in the data itself and thereby emphasises the “metaphoric richness” of a story. It has given rise to a growing literature in social sciences research which experiments with a variety of literary genres to emplot research data. This second phase using a narrative mode of analysis was congruent with the literary arts-based approach being undertaken as I wanted to engage as creatively as I could with the interview data.

I adopted two different strategies initially depending on whether the interviews were taped/ transcribed or not.

1. Transcribed interviews

“Poetry, even more so than music and painting, was the means by which he (early civilised man) examined, defined and celebrated the world in which he lived”.

(Carey & Martin, 1967, p.xiii)

In Chapter 1, I spoke about my liking for poetry, both reading and enjoying it as a literary art form and also, writing it as a form of my own creative expression. Creating free poetic structures from the transcriptions seemed a natural direction for me to go in, not least because of my love of the art form. Poetry is a deeply expressive form that can allow the reader to share in the writer’s thoughts and feelings about being in the world and experience a worldview which the reader may or may not share. Secondly, it allowed me to ‘clean’ the data for names, places and other ‘identifiers’ (Traianou, 2014) that might compromise the confidentiality and anonymity of the participant (see Section 6.4). More fundamentally, from my reading of the literature, I found that poetic forms of writing and research presentation are widely used in ethnography and ethnodrama in particular (Henderson, 2018; Spry, 2014; Denzin, 2014; Pelias, 2013; Weems, 2013; Leavy, 2010; Ward, 2011; Speedy, 2008; Saldana, 2005, 2006; SuAndi, 2006; Ellis, 2004; Spry, 2001). It is an ideal marriage of an art form and social inquiry because poetry is meant to make us think differently - “it invites us to go beyond our preconceptions” (Anderson, 2006, p.217). I resonate strongly with Blumenfeld-Jones (2002) as he asks himself:

“How do I actually write? I place myself in a “poetic” state of mind. Does that sound pretentious? I don’t mean for it to do so and yet I know of no other way to state it. I prepare myself to hear sounds, experience images, listen for music. I cannot stress strongly enough my devotion to words, to their sound as well as their meaning. For me that is what poetry is”.

(Blumenfeld-Jones, 2002, p.96)

Similarly, Speedy (2008, p. 67) talks about her therapeutic narrative work such that in her own “listening for, and co-construction of, talk that sings” she has found herself to be “increasingly positioned as if at a ‘poetry recital’.

As I was working with the transcripts to select material for an ethnographic playscript for oral dramatised performance, this seemed a natural developmental step in that process. Carey & Martin (1967, p. xv) discuss the need for the student of poetry to learn to read aloud, “to see how much its heard rhythm and music enrich its impact”. Poetry is meant to be performed, to be spoken, vocalised, to physically affect us (Boran, 1999). Poetry is also meant for an audience. It is meant to be *heard* in the same way that the purpose of this research is for the ‘*understory*’ of these women’s lived experiences to be heard. Saldana (2011) discussed poetic ‘arrangements’ of monologues in ethnodrama, especially the work of Anna Deveare Smith, whose style of spoken monologue as ‘organic poetry’ has been, and continues to be, used by others in the field. Saldana (2011), reflecting the discussion above on poetry as a form of connections, contends that poetic structures have an impact on the performer both in rehearsal and in live performance, and hence on the audience, because:

“It’s as if we (the actors) are forced to pay more attention to each particular grouping of words as a single idea and to attend to the way that the structure of free verse effects our oral reading of the poem”.

(Saldana, 2011, p. 72)

In ethnodramatic performance, by virtue of the performers having to ‘attend’ to structures, to the rhythm and patterns of speech that are imposed by the form and to physically alter their breathing and posture to deliver the lines as planned, the poetic monologue directs the audience/ reader to do the same. It asks them to direct their attention to where the writer intended it to go.

When analysing narrative in social research Elliot (2009) draws on James Gee’s (cited in Elliot, 2009, p 54) method of discourse analysis and suggests working with the ‘line’, which in the speech act is a short sequence of words comprising one ‘idea unit’. Elliot (2009) contends that Gee’s typology preserves the natural rhythms and cadences of speech; the

end of the line is marked by the speaker with a short pause and a fall in the pitch of the voice and these lines are grouped together to form stanzas, similar to stanzas in poetry. Lines within a stanza tend to match each other in topic while breaks between stanzas are marked by longer pauses by the speaker compared to those marking line breaks. Arvay (2003, p. 167) also re-transcribes conversations using the poetic 'line' and 'stanza' form.

The line in poetry is similarly a construction of words that together become a unit which can convey meaning – it is a deliberately connected and contained grouping considered by the writer as warranting the reader's attention. Anderson (2006, p.181) refers to the line as a "unit of attention". To be so it need not necessarily be a complete sentence and this is what distinguishes it from prose; it does not have to be complete to give meaning. Boran (1999, p.88) considers the line to be the basic unit of poetry, whether regular or irregular, which developed out of breath control in speech. Where the writer chooses to place line breaks or impose spaces and pauses can significantly impact on the reader's engagement with the poem. It can direct the reader's path through the poem, drawing the reader further into, or away from the story; it can evoke emotions, provoke deeper questioning, and encourage imaginings and re-imaginings of the world around us. Lines are the basic building blocks of poetry, connecting words to create meaningful units. Stanzas are then a grouping of connected lines which tend to be further associated. Groupings of stanzas can be connected to build the full poem. The line therefore is the formative unit that keeps us "on solid ground through the progress of the poem" (Boran, 1999, p.88). Boran (1999) further suggests using strong nouns and verbs within the line to make it stronger and more 'earthed', forcing us to breathe a certain way when we are reading the line:

"... whatever a poem may or may not have by way of meaning, one of its most potent weapons of persuasion is its ability to make us breathe according to its plan".

(Boran, 1999, p.88)

The transcripts are presented in poetic form for each of the respective participant interviews in Appendix 4 with some also presented in the body of the dissertation in Chapter

5. I present below a worked example, which is an excerpt from Julie's interview transcript, to show how I moved from Transcription to Poetic Monologue working with the line and the stanza:

/ indicates a line break

// indicates the end of a stanza or longer break

{ } where a phrase was omitted

() where a new word was added in

... where one full sentence or more was omitted

To clarify the subjective decision-making re selection of material to include or exclude, i) almost all of the omissions are my interjections / questions which I felt did not add to the narration in the poetic form but were necessary during the narrative event for the story construction or ii) speech mannerisms that were not necessarily intelligible when transcribed or iii) were speech fillers that occur in natural speech but again, look somewhat unintelligible when written down. Some of my stories and questions find their way into the participants poems and are kept in italics. From an ethical point of view, I had to take great care in terms of which of my own stories made their way into the final poems as they may have inadvertently identified other players in my story, colleagues in my own institution for example. Any additions were simply for clarity (of speech mannerisms/ fillers) or to help create a rhythm for aural engagement or aesthetic shape for visual engagement and this is discussed in section 4.3.4 below.

Most of the line breaks occur at the end of a clause or sentence and as such, I am simply mirroring natural speech rhythms where a speaker pauses (for breath, for thought). However, in the section at 4:00 mins, the line breaks occur within what would appear to be natural phrases. Anderson (2006) says this technique tends to pull the reader further into the poem, propelling them forward to make sense of the line by reading ahead. As such, I contend that this technique not only ensures that I stayed faithful to the narrative meanings that emerged in the interviews but in fact served to draw the reader into the stories of the lived experiences more keenly. This particular poem works to draw out Julie's 'portrait in

miniature' which (Saldana, (2014) states cannot be bettered by a researcher's interpretation or description. It also offers the reader a glimpse of the organisational dynamic, whereby staff in her HEI (IoT) can be somewhat disaffected from their work, and distrustful of management, a situation that has arisen as a consequence of the imposition of new-managerialism in the sector, as discussed at length in Chapter 2.

Table 4.3 Extract from Julie's transcript (See below for the poetic monologue)

'When there's a job needs doing'

J: I've always worked outside,/ not in an official capacity,/{but I've always had an interest in anything to with that, career development.}/ I guess I'm the type/ who has to have hands/ in a number of different pots.//I came from a background where, I suppose... / self-employed business./

My father, {who is now 84}, /was an entrepreneur/ before the word was coined **(03:02)**.// He was very innovative/ and creative in his thinking,/ and still is,/ and would have set up a business at home/ which was very successful.// It was just a shop-café, but {it would have had been known}.../ he was the first person to own an ice-cream cone machine,/{ for example. So people would travel...}

{A: ...so if there was a new idea he was on it?}

J: {Oh he was on it yeh and he's the same to this day.} So I mean our work ethic/ when we were young was/ you get up in the morning,/ and you work all day/ and we all worked from very young.//

{A: You worked in your fathers shop?}

J: {Yes,} I had the business for them/ when they were on holidays/ from the time I was 16 I'd say./ It was very busy,/ I'd say 12 to 13 hour days at least.// So I mean all of us,/ there 3 in the family, we would have a very strong work ethic./{ So I mean,} We would work round the clock really/ to be honest.// That was something I found /difficult to deal with when I was in the college...,/ {actually.} **(04:00 mins)** That people.../when there's a job (needs) doing/ they don't do it when it needs to be done./ That they would consider/ that they're so overworked,/ when they're delivering lectures,/ {and} (that) they might stop/ an idea when something happens./ When they're on holiday for example,/ I find that aspect difficult to deal with...//

{A: Because that goes against your own personal ethics?}

J:{ Oh yes, nothing to do with them!} /I mean they're probably right,/ it's probably good that they can do that;/ whereas to me if something is worthwhile doing/ {at the time} then it's relevant to me.//{if I'm interested in it I just do it.}

{A: And you would struggle with people who wouldn't have that same ethic?}

J: {Yeh I would,} I find people who have that mentality/ shouldn't be doing what they're doing./ I really think they should be out of the place/ {and I believe myself if I don't love what I'm doing}. That's probably why I would do a lot of things outside/ because I {would} love the things I do outside.// A lot of people {that you're} (are) volunteering,/ people are doing it because they really want to do it./ **(05:00)** They're passionate about something,/ so it's a different kind of work ethic really.//

J: (06:00) {I think its aspects, and it's aspects that you should be presenting.} Doing that(makes) everyone feels positive/ and you have people not thinking /'It's 5 O'clock, I'm finished'/ but (I) have people ringing me /'It's 8 O'clock, I'm sorry for ringing you/ but I've had a great idea about our event'/ and I say, 'What is it?'// So that's what's happening...//

When there's a job needs doing...

I've always worked outside,
not in an official capacity...
I guess I'm the type
who has to have hands
in a number of different pots.

I came from a background where, I suppose...

{a} self-employed business.
My father, who is now 84,
was an entrepreneur
before the word was coined.

He was very innovative
and creative in his thinking,
and still is,
and would have set up a business at home
which was very successful.

It was just a shop/café, but...
he was first person to own an ice-cream cone machine.

...

So I mean our work ethic
when we were young was
you get up in the morning,
and you work all day
and we all worked from very young...

I had the business for them

when they were on holidays
from the time I was 16 I'd say.

It was very busy,
I'd say 12 to 13-hour days at least.

So I mean all of us -
there were three in the family -
we would have a very strong work ethic.
We would work round the clock really,
to be honest.

That was something I found
difficult to deal with
when I was in the college.

That people...
when there's a job needs doing
they don't do it when it needs to be done.

That they would consider
that they're so overworked,
when they're delivering lectures,
that they might stop an idea when something happens.

When they're on holiday for example,
I find that aspect difficult to deal with...

I mean they're probably right,
it's probably good that they can do that,
whereas to me if something is worthwhile doing
then it's relevant to me.

I find people who have that mentality
shouldn't be doing what they're doing.
I really think they should be out of the place...
That's probably why I would do a lot of things outside
because I would love the things I do outside.

A lot of people... are volunteering,
people are doing it because they really want to do it.
They're passionate about something,
so it's a different kind of work ethic really.

...

Doing that makes everyone feels positive
and you have people not thinking
'It's 5 o'clock, I'm finished'
but I have people ringing me
"It's 8 o'clock, I'm sorry for ringing you
but I've had a great idea about our event"
and I say, "What is it?"

So that's what was happening.

(Extract from Julie's Poetic Monologue created from the opening sequence of Julie's transcript)

Individual poems were created from the full monologue and the titles of each of these tended to come from phrases within the lines themselves. Boran (1999, p. 106) tells us that titles should serve to give the reader a textual clue as to the content of what it is they are about to read. They should create anticipation and eagerness to read on; they should be the doorway through which the reader enters the world of the poet. Anderson (2006) also discusses the space between the title and the first line as being anticipatory and the moment after the last line as being potentially transformative for the reader; so strong

beginnings and endings, as in most textual art forms, can make the work more engaging for the reader.

It was only after constructing the poetic monologues myself that I read in more detail the work of Mary Weems (2013) entitled *'Fire- a Year in Poems'*. It was such an affirming experience for me to see poetic work like mine, seemingly similarly structured and similarly presented in an academic text in the field, by an established academic who declares herself to be "first and foremost" a poet. She in turn is answering Louise Richardson's (1994) call to use "writing as method". Similarly, it was equally affirming to see Speedy's (2008) research in the area of therapeutic narrative interviewing and to recognise her focus on "personal or local stories" (p. 67), her direct work with colleagues (p.69) as participants, her desire to simply "chat about what had gone before" (p. 69) and her representation of those interview engagements in poetic form (p.71).

This firmly establishes my own writing preference as having found a legitimate 'home' within the field of ethnography for any future research endeavours, which is something that I look forward to exploring. Weems (2013, p. 313) states that she places the poems in an order that "felt right in the moment in terms of flow" and like my own selections, she tells the reader that each poem can stand-alone, and the meaning-making experience is entirely up to the interpretation of each reader who engages with the work.

2. Non-recorded/ non-transcribed interviews

Initially, for the one interviewee (April) that I did not have recordings, but only hand-taken notes, I did not have the depth of literally-transcribed phrasing that I needed to develop them into the poetic form above. The stories and episodes and partial phrasing that I had collated would feature in the playscript but I needed to find a way to represent these dialogical exchanges so I could keep them 'alive' within the body of the dissertation. I experimented with a form of creative non-fiction story writing inspired by the writings of

Ellis and Berger (2002), Ellis (2004), Davis and Ellis (2008), Ellis (2016), Holman-Jones (2016) and Richardson (2013).

Ellis (2004) tells us that she thinks like an ethnographer but writes like a novelist or storyteller;

“Autoethnographic writing goes hand in hand with fictional techniques such as dialogue, scene setting, and plot development. These strategies allow me to show rather than tell, present a feeling for how life flows, and display the autoethnographic process as I teach it”.

(Ellis, 2004, p.335)

Ellis (2004, p. xx) intentionally combines fictionality with ethnography. She uses the creative writer’s techniques of description, scene-setting, characterisation and dialogue to establish the premise for her novelisation, in this case the teaching of a college class in autoethnography. Throughout the novel, she interweaves theory into the story, making academic references and citations to substantiate her own and her students’ observations and beliefs about the discipline. Employing a slightly different strategy, Holman-Jones (2016) emphasises the place of theory in autoethnographic story – it is not an add-on but a central component. “Theory,” she tells us, “tells a story – of how things are and helps us to discover the possibilities of how things might be” (Holman-Jones, 2016, pp.228- 229). Richardson (2013) on the other hand writes primarily in a strongly fictionalised form with a heavy reliance on dialogue to move the action along in a very personal and engaging piece on a fiftieth school re-union in this case.

Holman-Jones (2016) encourages writers to experiment with form to help find one that captures the feelings and meaning of an experience. Therefore while I felt drawn primarily to the poetic form, I wanted to give life to the experiences I had which did not fit that form, but which could be more readily expressed in story. Boran (1999, p. 112) tells us that the short story form is directly linked to the poem as it tries to describe a moment in time in which there is an “awareness of change” but it draws on the techniques or methods of ‘telling’ used in the novel. O’ Connor (cited in Anderson, 2006, p. 525) considers that a good

short story should be no less meaningful than a novel “nor should its action be less complete”.

April’s story re-creating the interview is presented in Chapter 5 to follow. I also created a second short story from my interviews with Francis, presented also in Chapter 5. While I had interview recordings available to me from the interviews with Francis, I felt that the story format allowed me to really forefront the importance of relationship in the narrative inquiry process because of the very strong and well-established professional relationship that I had with Francis prior to and during the process. I was also inspired by Francis’ story in the final chapter as I began to reflect back on this narrative inquiry as a body of research – in particular the words that Francis left with me at the end of her interviews, which she felt had ‘*brought her back down the road*’ of her own career and working life. This brought to mind Carter’s (1990) notion of inter-generational women connecting through the act of storytelling, maintaining a continuity of voice across the generations, as if we are speaking through our mothers.

4.3.4 From Transcript to the beginnings of an Ethnodrama

As discussed above, I spent many months working with the transcripts, analysing the narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995) by identifying narrative threads and shared experiences that emerged in the narrative interviews. I had created early drafts of re-worked versions of the interview material with broad brushstrokes that provided insights into each of the participants (see Table 4.1 above). It is important to note again that these were loose headings and every interview recording did not contain reference to each and every one of these storylines. The direction the interviews took was not driven by a particular agenda as the approach taken was designed to co-construct stories of lived experiences - the focus of each of the participant interviews therefore emerged in a unique way and this meant that not every interview led to discussions on the same topics, in the same order or to the same extent. The interviews were directed by what was important to us both in the moment of

the collaborative interview. The fact that commonalities emerged is testament to the shared experiences we have of being women in similar roles.

4.3.4.1 An 'Ensemble of Ideas'

Attempting to write a dramatic playscript was a completely new departure for me and I recognised that I could not work in isolation. In December 2017, I approached a member of the Faculty of Arts at MIC, Dr. Fiona McDonagh, who kindly agreed to give me some direction on the process of crafting a script from my transcript material. My supervisor, Dr. Dorothy Morrissey, also joined Dr. McDonagh at these sessions, which took place over two mornings (11th December, 2017; 11th January 2018). During these workshop sessions we borrowed from the notion of an 'ensemble of ideas' (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007) in theatre devising to generate ideas and this process is discussed in detail in Appendix 2. For me, the starting point or 'idea' for the final product was embedded in my research intention – 'thinking theatrically' with the creation of an ethnodrama emerging from the participant interviews gathered as 'data' during the research process.

In preparation for the first session, I returned to the participant narratives and the original recordings and transcriptions and extracted dialogue, images and story-threads that resonated strongly with me. Rib Davis, an established creator of verbatim theatre (<https://ribdavis.com>) suggests making notes on the source material which helps to establish a list of scenes. This links the scenes directly to the sources and can help to ensure that no one scene or vignette focuses too much on one topic or theme - it encourages the writer to work in miscellany. I proceeded to collate the story extracts or narrative fragments, loosely categorising them in such a way that a 'shape' began to emerge for the script. I had endeavoured to pick out images and narrative phrases (and had highlighted these) in the speech selections which could perhaps act as stimuli (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007) for movement and action and which could possibly provide dramatic structure. I have presented a segment of this table above in Section 4.3.3 (Table 4.2) as I

was simultaneously working on the process of ‘storying’ the participant narratives (Kim, 2016) and creating the script. These activities were not in competition with each other in terms of the demands on my time or their respective importance as part of the research process, but rather were done in tandem, one mutually supporting and informing the other as I moved over and back from the transcribing of the participant narratives to the ethnodrama, and back again.

One of the first activities we undertook in this workshop session was to read through the collated and categorised speech extracts on an individual basis, then we came together to share our thoughts and ideas on where it might lead to. Dr. Morrissey’s observations focused on gender issues, where the dialogue highlighted the participants’ experiences of being a ‘deficit’ and the ‘other’ in their workplaces; a lack of public voice, a sense of being disempowered (Foucault) by a patriarchal culture, the burden of ‘care’, balancing femininity with the performative masculine norms of management. Dr. McDonagh on the other hand identified with the words and images that I had highlighted, and which could act as stimuli for movement or speech sequences such as ‘flexible’, ‘shape and mould’, ‘them and us’, ‘fixing and mending’, ‘parachuted’, ‘lunatic’ and ‘tears’. My responses in some ways were a mixture of these two perspectives having come prepared to extract dialogue for the purposes of scripting, and with the knowledge that I was using a critical feminist lens through which to view the field material.

As discussed in section 4.3.3, I had categorised the selected speech into a number of different boxes, loosely coded to refer to: *Becoming (a Head of Department)/ Early Days in the Role/ Keeping Everyone Happy/ If you’re a Manager/ Male Dominated Senior Management/ Women’s Ways of Working/ Being a Woman in the Role*. These categories emerged out of the participant narratives as loose commonalities and were the beginnings of a possible emplotment. A sample of the combined responses after the initial workshop exercise can be viewed in Table 4.3 below for Box 2 (Early Days in the Role) while the full table of excerpts is available in Appendix 2.

Table 4.2 Extracts from participant stories, showing the feminist lens of analysis and the stimuli for dramatisation

<p>Excerpts from interview texts (numbers identify the interviewee/ interview to the researcher; text in bold specifically resonates with me, corroborating my own experiences or rubs up against me, prompting me to remember a different experience to the interviewee).</p>	<p>Feminist Lens</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Otherness 2. Power 3. Care & Caring 	<p>Images, Ideas for Script</p>
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<p>Box 2 Early days... I found it initially quite isolated... and strange. Because I had been in an office with a group of people and suddenly... I was sitting on my own and it was so quiet. (6) And people only came to the office when they had a problem.</p> <p>I couldn't be in the office with my group, my normal (social) group. (6)</p> <p>I wanted to stay in the office but they told me I couldn't (0).</p> <p>But I met somebody and I said 'how are you?' and she said 'Oh I can't talk to you now because you're management. I can't tell you what the problem is.' (6)</p> <p>Suddenly there was a 'them and us', (6) because you're management now we can't talk to you.</p> <p>I rang a colleague from my lecturing days. What am I</p>	<p>Isolation from previous social group (as well as isolation from male peers in management). Loneliness. Set apart. 'Otherness' (1)</p> <p>Holders of power, gatekeepers, enforcing a code of isolation. Controlling (2).</p> <p>Creating a 'them and us' separation, being kept apart (1, 2).</p>	<p>Rapunzel in the Tower, Sleeping Beauty, locked away</p> <p>Keys to the Kingdom.</p> <p>Separate spheres, never meeting</p>
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<p>supposed to be doing? He said– ‘Sit back, don’t worry, they’ll come knocking when they want something. (0) You are there to serve their needs.’</p> <p>What a way to start because... it was clear they could shape me and mould me as they saw fit. (0)</p> <p>I was given no training.... What do I do if someone comes in with a complaint? Nothing, it was just purely left up to my gut reaction. (6)</p> <p>On that very first day, I said to my boss... What am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to be? She said,- see how it goes (0, 6).</p> <p>I thought there would actually be training... I thought someone would explain to you (5).</p> <p>It was straight in. There was no honeymoon.</p> <p>Doubts. Will I be able to fight for them? Will I be able to represent them? Will I be able to talk the talk ... when I need to talk it? (2)</p> <p>So I started reading up on it... educated myself really. (2) It didn’t take that long... I started to talk to people... there wasn’t really an issue. It just started to dissolve.</p> <p>Well, I suppose I was very unsure in the beginning because I wasn’t</p>	<p>Women socialised into serving the needs of others. Not agentic, autonomous being. (1, 2))</p> <p>According to patriarchal norms (1)</p> <p>No path to leadership – no training. No one to learn from. Entering a male world not designed for them. (1, 2)</p> <p>What are the expectations of a honeymoon? (1)</p> <p>Female self-doubt (1)</p> <p>Agency. Taking control. Resisting. Educating the self (1, 2)</p> <p>Female style – communication with others</p> <p>Women unsure, doubting themselves (1).</p>	<p>Being shaped and moulded, pulled by others</p> <p>No ‘script’ exists for women in this world</p> <p>Honeymoon bouquet, <i>Happy Ever After</i></p> <p>Note repetition – how might this be used? <i>Chorus?</i></p>
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<p>from (the) background and I was Head.</p> <p>So I went to the first meeting and... I remember my boss coming in and saying "Can you handle the first meeting? Everyone, this is XXX. I'm going." I said, "OK. As you all know I don't know the first thing about (this) and I'm relying on all of you to teach me everything you know: and they all said "we will, don't worry.."" (6)</p> <p>I had been 'parachuted' in. (4)</p> <p>There was resentment in the organisation.... Resentment dissipated over time as I started to talk to people. I established good working relations with people.</p>	<p>No path to leadership.</p> <p>Almost submissive, deferring (1).</p> <p>Catapulting women in for own agendas. 'Glass Cliff'. Where the situation is already very difficult. (2)</p> <p>Taking control, agency. Talking with people. Using female skills of communication etc. Women's way of working. Not playing by their rules. (1, 2)</p>	<p>Being 'thrown to the wolves'.</p> <p>Being thrown in at the deep end, the impossible mission.</p>
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4.3.4.2 Weaving and Spinning

The notion of women 'weaving and spinning' stories together had emerged early on in the research process through discussions with my supervisor on the adoption of a narrative inquiry methodology, and I drew on the notion of women collectively spinning and weaving together that is endemic in the fairy tale genre as a metaphor for the story-sharing that is at the very heart of this narrative inquiry (see Prologue). I have almost been creating 'a patchwork quilt' of lived experience and like Eavan Boland (2001) in her poem '*Patchwork*',

the participant narratives left me with my own “sumptuous trash bag of colours” which I then had to stitch and patch together and interweave with the academic literature. The theme of weaving and spinning was therefore deeply embedded in both the story-making as well as the writing process for me. It represented the physical and creative act of story sharing central to this literary arts-based narrative inquiry, a metaphoric ‘spinning’ of tales into poems, creative non-fiction stories and an ethnodrama emerging out of our shared experiences, articulated as women amongst women in our storytelling.

In the early days of drafting the script, I experimented with drawing upon the fairy tale and its portrayal of women in a patriarchal society to tell our story (See Column 3 in Table 9.1 above). Fairy tales and their character motifs are parables of the processes of female socialisation in patriarchal cultures (Zipes, 2014; Warner, 2014; Kolbenschag, 1979). The ‘collective’ craft of spinning is part of the history of the gathering of fairy-tales themselves, deriving from peasant women who passed the time telling each other tales at night as they went about their chores (Zipes 1983; 1994; 2014). Both the ‘mirror’ and the notion of weaving threads feature strongly as motifs in the fairy-tale genre and are associated with the feminine (Hasse, 2008; Zipes, 1983; 1994). Furthermore, the use of motifs from the fairy-tale genre could help establish the sense of ‘artifice’ and fictionality that has been used to create the script without detracting from the verbatim speech itself. However, in an early first draft, I found that I was struggling to combine a very stylised telling of the story and the use of fairy-tale heroines/ motifs with my desire to use verbatim speech and in the end, I removed this layer of fictionality from the script but kept some of the references to well-established motifs (Rapunzel’s ‘tower’ for example).

The methodological and ethical implications of the choice to use verbatim speech are discussed in detail in Chapter 7 as there are always going to be shifting tensions between aesthetics and accountability (Gallagher, Wessels and Yaman Nteilioglou, 2012) which must be accounted for. The mechanics and devices used to craft the ethnodrama itself are outlined in Appendix 2 and cover the practicalities of creating the ‘chorus’, embedding physical movement, emplotment and the use of music and staging techniques to develop the ‘mise en scene’.

It is also important to note that the interpretive processes that began with transcription, and led on to the processes of narrative smoothing to create poetic monologues, non-fiction short stories and the ethnodrama were not isolated, competing processes, with one demanding more time and space than the other. They were in fact worked in parallel, each operating as a form of 'weight-bearing' wall (King and Horrocks, 2010) to the other, offering a means of "traversing the conversational landscape" (Speedy, 2008, p. 67) in an attempt to come to a new understanding of the lived experiences of the participants.

4.4 Working with real, lived experience

In narrative inquiry, people are viewed as having lives that are "shaped by social and cultural narratives" and are not just seen as representing ideas, theories or convenient categories for analysis, as in formalistic inquiry (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p. 43). The participants for the most part in this study were professional colleagues and their professional lives were intertwined with my own to varying extents. I had to learn to cope with my constant anxieties about where it could go wrong, particularly in terms of the relationships that were involved, and which would continue once the study was completed and published. Saldana (1998) in a paper suitably entitled 'Juicy Stuff' observes that while ethical issues did not emerge prominently until the later stages of that project for him, in reality he knew that they had been lurking there, "waiting in the wings all along to make an entrance" (Saldana, 1998, p.193). The HE community in Ireland is relatively small. In terms of working with the transcripts and interview recordings, I needed to find a way to use these without compromising the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants as a matter of priority, while at the same time refraining from over-censoring these narratives to the point where they would lose their inherent integrity, no longer capable of telling the story that was intended (Trainou, 2014). It was also personally and professionally important to me that relationships would not be damaged in any way as a consequence of this research.

Aside from the adoption of an arts-based approach which seeks "to engage in imagination that enriches inquiry spaces and research understandings" (Caine et al., 2017, p. 215), the

use of fictionalisation techniques in ethnography and narrative inquiry is primarily done for the purposes of maintaining confidentiality and protecting the identity (Caine et al. 2017) of the participants. To that end, by shaping and moulding the participant interviews into one of two different fictionalised forms - poetic monologue or creative non-fiction story, verbatim extracts from which have then formed the basis for an ethnodrama (see below) - I was able to maintain that confidentiality throughout. Discussing the centrality of ethics in qualitative research, Trainou (2014) suggests strategies such as the invention of names and places, the omission of personal characteristics or “contextual features of places that may allow them to be identified” (Trainou, 2014, p. 65) or imaginative fictionalisation of these contexts to provide disguise. Trainou (2014) notes however that anonymity can be looked at in terms of ‘degrees’ of anonymity – in other words with respect to participant ‘identity’ for example, these should be more or less difficult to recognise by different audiences but sometimes anonymisation may not succeed in preventing participants being recognised by *some* people. She clarifies that confidentiality is an important ethical consideration and anonymisation is a useful strategy to achieve it, to varying degrees.

I drew on these techniques as a way of ‘cleaning’ the data for use throughout the thesis as well as for the purposes of evidentiary record-keeping. The creative re-working of the field texts (transcripts, hand-written notes and recordings) enabled me to remove any names of people, places or events that might act to identify the participant. Different forms and modes of writing are considered to be part and parcel of the ethnographic method (Ellis, 2016; Brochner & Ellis, 2016; Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015; Holman-Jones, Adams and Ellis, 2013; Ellis, 2004)) and the creative engagement with these texts has been one of the most rewarding experiences of this thesis journey for me and represents a completely unexpected outcome. I had not envisaged anything beyond the playscript when I set out on this journey. As part of the process of working to clean the interview ‘data’, the ‘re’-presentation of the participant interviews as creative non-fiction stories and poetic monologues which emerged also means that their lived realities are presented both to the reader and to the participants themselves in the body of this thesis (See Chapters 5 and 6)

as a way of honouring their engagement with this research and ‘giving back’ (Parker-Jenkins, 2014), with their permission.

All of the creative material included in this dissertation has been shared with the respective participants. The final dissertation in its totality was not shared but the individual contributions were, as well as the final playscript and the final chapter.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I set out and traced through my research design which was built on the methodological framework established in Chapter 3. A literary arts-based narrative inquiry is methodologically congruent with a constructivist ontology and interpretivist, subjectivist epistemology, fore-fronting as it does the research participants’ own lived experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 209) with the capacity to suggest new ways of looking at the world (Kim, 2016).

Personal narrative surrounds us (Llangellier, 1999, p. 125) as “the capacity for telling one’s own story has been reclaimed in these post-modern times”. However, personal narrative exists in the liminal spaces between oral and written communication, fact and fiction, the public and the private. It exists therefore in the margins (Butler, 1999; 1993) and is ‘messy’ (Denzin, 1997). The risks of working with personal narrative are many including being overly self-indulgent and confessional, or giving in to thoughtless, unguarded and possibly even damaging disclosures or unwittingly breaking confidences or revealing identities. The fear of transgression on any of the above counts at times threatened to bring me to a standstill on more than one occasion and was a key driver in the constant reworking of the transcripts and hand-written notes for presentation. Presenting and ‘re’-presenting our storied lives to the reader is an interpretive act driven by a desire to honour the participants as individual agentic beings and to privilege their voice as women working through their career lives in a male-dominated environment. The arts-based interpretation and narration also honours the method of data collection as relational, dynamic and interactional.

As interactional dialogue reflects the biographical self, interpreting the narratives that emerged provided a vehicle for reflection on my own story as a researcher in the co-construction of the participant stories (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). But more than that, as the interpretive work progressed forwards from the transcripts and hand-written notes and on into the playscript, I began to appreciate how my own experiences and biases were impacting on the research (Jenoure, 2002, p.80). While the loosely coded episodes (Polkinghorne's (1995) paradigmatic analysis of narratives) resonated with some of my own experiences in the role, throughout the process of creatively interpreting each of the individual participant interviews (Polkinghorne's (1995) narrative mode of analysis) I began to realise that while there is more of 'me' in some than in others, depending on whether the topics discussed resonated to a greater or lesser extent with my own stories, there were some experiences that were different and new to me and which I wanted to describe as well.

These ideas are explored in detail from Chapters 5 through 7, as I begin to unravel the threads of the participant narratives under the glare of a feminist lens and reflect on the methodological choices that I have made in this research undertaking.

Chapter 5 Unravelling Story Threads using a Feminist Lens of Inquiry

5.1 A Postmodern, poststructuralist critical feminist approach

In Chapters 2 and 3, I set out the theoretical and philosophical frameworks respectively for the interpretation of the data that I have undertaken in a process of coming to new knowledge about the lived experiences of women in HE management and leadership in Ireland. Situated in the qualitative paradigm, and adopting a constructivist ontological and epistemological stance, I have engaged in a literary arts-based narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016), using narrative inquiry as both methodology and method (Chapters 5 and 6). Story is therefore central to this thesis and the participant narratives have each been creatively and artistically rendered into poetic monologues or creative non-fiction stories (Chapter 4). Fundamental to my research intentions, I set out to unpick the participant narratives and tease out the story threads, from which I could weave a new story, culminating in the crafting of a short ethnographic playscript (Saldana, 2003; 2010; 2014; 2017) for the purposes of wider dissemination (presented in Chapter 7).

The teasing out of the story threads embedded in the participant narratives as presented in this chapter is informed by a critical feminist resistance perspective, a postmodern poststructuralist turn which seeks to examine how the participants live as agentic beings, capable of acting as well as being acted upon, at once both subjects and objects of power relations (Foucault, 1994; 1980; Barker 1998). For the purposes of explication in this chapter, excerpts from the stories and selected poems are presented.²⁷

Feminist research practice is identifiable by the assumption of the significance of gender in society, with an emphasis on the reflectiveness of the methodology rather than a preoccupation with the method – it is capable of using emotion and feeling as a source of

²⁷ Additional material from the transcripts not used in this chapter is available to view in Appendix 5.

new insight and knowledge and values the personal and the everyday as worthy of study. Feminist research practice is also necessarily political (Lather, 1992) because of the centrality of gender as the basic organising principle in society, which as a social construction (Butler, 1993; 1999) means that living as a woman in a patriarchal culture affects every aspect of our lived experience in a society where the distribution of power and privilege is neither innocent nor neutral, but strongly gender biased. As has been discussed in Chapter 2, HE is one such organisational culture wherein “a cognitive dissonance continues to prevail when women occupy positions of power in academia” (Harford, 2018, p. 14).

5.2 The Participants’ Stories

Each participant story is ‘re-told’ here with a focus on one or more of her experiences that speak to her gendered managerial role in HE in Ireland, with particular attention to the impact of new-managerialism on those experiences. The stories of Deidre, Molly, Jane and Julie are in the form of a series of poems, which are themselves extracts from a larger compendium of monologic poems (See Appendix 4) constructed from each participant’s interviews (See Chapter 4)²⁸.

I have let the participant poetic monologues speak for themselves, with little in the way of interruption or interpretation but have added in a number of annotations in each case which provide me with an opportunity to find ‘openings’ (Tamboukou, 2013, p. 94) for the analysis to come. Speedy (2008) uses this technique to great effect. The lived experiences of the participants are then discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 with reference to the key theorists as discussed in Chapter 2 such as Bourdieu on habitus and cultural capital, Foucault on power, Butler and de Beauvoir on otherness and subjectivity, and Noddings and Gilligan on the ethic of care and caring.

²⁸ Pressure of space does not allow for the inclusion of each participant story in full in the body of the dissertation.

5.2.1 Deirdre's Story

I met with Deirdre on two occasions during the data collection phase. Her answers to questions could be long and thoughtful. She took her time to muse over things and admitted in the interviews that the job allows her little space or time to think about things to that extent before. She is a professional practitioner in her discipline and continues to practice on a community/ part-time basis outside of the academic year, which she feels gives her a different perspective at times on the demands of her academic leadership role.

Her monologue is told here in an imposed chronology (see Chapter 3, Section 3.34) and moves from her recollections of applying for the role, where she admits to a lack of confidence in herself to have even considered it before to the desire to be mentored in the role now that she has succeeded. Her sense of having a skills deficit for the role pervades her story and she appears to be almost in a conversation with herself in terms of how she works to overcome that sense of 'lack' or 'deficit'. Her particular discipline is male-dominated in terms of academic leadership roles across the sector, and while she states that she does not herself see a 'gender' angle, she acknowledges that there are more males at the 'top' in her discipline whilst also expressing her preference for a female role model to be her mentor as she feels that the relationship would be easier to develop.

The second focus of these extracts from Deirdre's monologue is on finding her own 'way of working' as a female Head of Department, which she frames as finding the 'balance of care and empowerment' in her efforts to combat the pressurising 'output' (new-managerialist) demands of the role, which she finds very 'draining' and burdensome, with looking after or 'caring for' her staff. She emphasises the role of relationship throughout, in terms of how she manages her staff, as a crucial factor in deciding on a mentor, as well as observing the lack of emotional support that she gets from her male senior manager (absence of relationship).

Shortcomings

It had been advertised {a number of times} ...

I suppose the reason I decided to apply...

was I felt that... we'd had no Head of Department

for a number of years,

as a result of that, the department had ...

started to slow down, significantly,

and yet all around us there was tremendous change happening {in the field}.

There was tremendous change happening in our partnering institutions

but we were ... in many respects,

... holding forth without a head of department.

I regret perhaps not probing this sense of duty and commitment and loyalty to the department and her staff more.

So I decided that I would... put my name forward for the role.

I hadn't really anticipated that I would get the role,

because I feel that there...

a number of shortcomings in my own application.

...

And (that) I was far from being at that level at that time.

There were other shortcomings...

the fact that I never held a management position in my life.

I was never trained to be a manager...

...

And to date I've not received training...

around management.

And I think that it continues to be a deficit,

however, at this time I cannot take that on

because I'm so overtaken...

This was the experience of all of the women in this study. The step up from Lecturer to Management is immediate on promotion, with no transitioning or support in place. This is not gendered and is the same for both men and women in the system.

There are a number of things to do all at once,
but I can't do them all at once.

Mentor 1

Now I have...

decided who I would like to see as a mentor for me.

And I'm going to be meeting this person –

she doesn't know yet –

It's a Head of Department.

Now she has only recently become a Head of Department,

but I see from the way she manages

and I see from her emails,

I don't know what her background is but I'm very...

impressed by the way she manages her department

and manages as part of the Head of Department team.

I'm very impressed with her.

...

So what in those years has struck you sufficiently to say,

"I want to be mentored by that individual.

I think she really has something to teach me"?

Well one of the things that stands out for me

is that she's very assured of what it is she's doing.

Whereas I'm... I'm fuzzy,

and I think my fuzziness impacts upon (the department)

though I came into to the role to try give direction to,

the department.

I felt that I had been floundering.

There are no formal institutional networking supports in place.

Deirdre displays a lack of confidence in herself and this ebbs and flows throughout her narrative. How can women be better prepared to take on leadership roles?

She's very clear.

She's very self-assured –

Some men come across as very, and I don't want to –

I was thinking about this coming in and preparing for this interview -
is that I don't really see that there are gender issues,
myself.

In my experience.

Uhm... but I – I have to say that some people -
and I suppose because it's mostly men that are in these positions -
predominantly it's men in these positions.

They do come across as very self-assured,
and sometimes you have to listen to people –
you have to listen to people that are coming across as self-assured
but then wonder what else is there behind that self-assurance.

And what's the capacity and the competence behind the self-assuredness.

And I feel that this lady,

to me she comes across as someone who's self-assured...

She doesn't come across as self-assured, like, she knows everything.

... she's clear, and sharp and to the point...

And I'm like,

"Ok, I can follow that. That's clear to me."

"There's something I can learn from her."

... Male heads of departments.

They're extremely helpful and they take a lead all the time...

But I know that the {} men are very helpful and they would help,
but they just... to me I can't see myself developing that type of...

Even though Deirdre believes there are no 'gender' issues at play herself, she acknowledges that it is mostly men in HOD positions across the sector in her discipline. She herself took over from a male HOD who had a very well-established reputation in the sector.

Men as the natural inheritors of power (Nicholson, 1996).

relationship with them –

I'd say if I asked them they'd have absolutely no problem

...

and they'd always give the answers,

but they'd never give anything more than that.

Whereas with (her) you got the impression that you could ask her... y'know...

....

Yeah, maybe as a woman it's easier

to have a relationship with another woman then.

Is it easier...?

I'm not sure.

...

Y'know, you didn't see a gender angle; but I think there is.

... Yeah, no I hadn't thought about that.

... the female bit, but it might be underneath it all.

*The relationship part of it which might be easier,
with a female.*

I happen to think that relationship is really important,
and I think relationship and the ability to be yourself,
to be able to say to the person...

"I – I have exhibited a weakness and

I don't know what I'm doing.

Can you show me... how to do it better?" Y'know?

I think when you have a good relationship with someone...

you can (be) open and say

"Look, I might have made a mistake here" or

"I'm not sure what I'm doing."

Whereas when... when you're getting advice from somebody

*The value of relationship in
mentoring (Cross et al., 2019; Dutta
et al. 2011).*

that you wouldn't have that relationship with...

It's different.

Not ambitious

One of the big things for me is that I'm not one bit of ambitious.

I've never been ambitious,

ever in my life...

And I suppose that's holding me back, too.

And yet you're in a Head of Department role, which is a permanent position;

you're doing a PhD because you know you need to have it...

That says... that they're very ambitious actions.

But I have no great ambition to be anything or anyone...

I'm just – I just came to this job because... we're lagging.

I didn't think I'd get it.

Almost as a duty? An obligation?

I didn't think I'd get it in the sense that...

I really, genuinely, don't have an ambition.

I – I was very happy being a lecturer.

We – I – in my own life I have a very positive {life} outside of work life.

Yes, and work... in some way impinges on that

because I don't get the same amount of time to

– to be with... to, ah, do things I like, and...

and I'm going to have to reevaluate this

And I want to be able to...

I want to be able to use my 50s doing something that's for me...

I love studying. I've always studied, and that's why –

I've studied for the like of it rather than the ambition,

...

So I've always studied to – to enable myself...

Just for arming yourself with information and giving you confidence?

Yes, an interest in the area and learning.

And all that learning, then, feeds into me as who I am as a person,
and who I am with my friends and my family.

As well as who I am at work.

Maybe it's about how you define ambition?

I suppose I see ambition as somebody that's like...
determined to go for the top job.

Career ambition.

That's what I see ambition is.

Because I'm not that.

If I had to do all those things....

Of course I've been supported by my husband
who never stops supporting me,
and I'm the major wage earner;
and I suppose this is why I think I'm not always gender {focused} in my perspective.

Because... he reared the kids, he makes the dinners, he does the house... -

He's at home?

Yeah he's at home, but he also has his own business from home.

Which is secondary to him; he could take it or leave it, but so –

and he does all the appointments with their teeth,
and he looks after them when –

when they're in trouble

or when they're upset they'll often –

they'll ring him instead of ringing me, y'know?

Is this a masculinist construction of career ambition? Deirdre does not see herself as ambitious 'in that way'.

Deirdre, Molly and Jane all talk about the support they have / had at home so that they could dedicate themselves more to their job. But I had to do 'all those things' as a single parent. I need to examine myself and my response to this.

So that gives me good freedom.
It's gives me huge freedom.
And I think as a woman, then...
I feel as a woman...
if I had to do all those things there's no way,
I wouldn't even go to lecturing...
I wouldn't even be able to –
To be a lecturer as I had to do my masters...
and the only reason I moved into education was
because I knew that it was good for my children.
That was my main reason –
I enjoyed teaching anyway.
Most of my decisions are made...
because they suit my personal life
and I'm not ambitious...

Without this support at home, Deirdre admits she would not be able to take on what she has.

Women with family make career decisions in HE to suit their family life more so than men, and this is well established in the literature (Chapter 2). I did the same myself.

Limitations

*Because I have, y'know I have family commitments ...
And that limits then, in terms of
other roles and other things I can take on.
I just sometimes simply have to say,
"No I can't do that"
because if I do that – if I do that piece of work
it would take time away
and I'm already away... so long.
So I can't afford to... so yeah I think we do –
Women do make those decisions.*

We – we have a member of staff here with... a man, with a young family,
and he's made the decision so that he is with his family.

And it's probably becoming way more... common now, shared parenting.

Shared parenting is becoming a common thing, which is a good thing
but certainly ... in the majority situation...

women would be carers as well the – as well as working, y'know?

But obviously women are going into management.

You have gone into it and I've got into it.

But... there are limitations...

*Woman are willing to take a step, get to a certain point;
but then the demands to go much further...*

Why would you bother? That's the question I'd have to ask?

Why would you bother?

What is it – what is in it?

What would you get from it?

Yeah, why would you take on that?

There's a lot of stuff that goes with it, but...

to the detriment of what?

And for me it would my family life. Y'know?

Absolutely

And my personal life, y'know and my commitments –

I have my responsibilities.

My responsibilities at home would prohibit me from...

considering other things, y'know?

Absolutely.

With men who are in the position who have a carer –

Co-construction of the story of career progression – 'to lean in or not' - as we are both asking the question of the other. We are trying to tease out the reasons why as a woman you would not go further up the ladder when family commitments might suffer.

as you said some men are the primary carers;
but in... if there is a – a second party
who can take on the role of caring
then they don't have to make that decision.
Yeah, and I suppose that's the same for me too.

You can make a decision –
It's a decision you can make.
It is about choice and we can all make decisions.

Women take the responsibility onto themselves as a choice they have to make, whereas for the majority of men in similar positions, the choice simply does not have to be made.

Burdened

Being burdened in the job...

I feel very burdened.

I usually start Monday feeling unburdened.

By the time lunch time comes...

What brings on those feelings of just feeling burdened or overwhelmed?

I would believe it's my own competence and
my own perception of a lack of confidence –

I suppose competence is not something that's absolute.

It's a range and –

I think competence is on a continuum and...

Ok I feel that I was a competent lecturer,
and I feel I – I could ... do anything with the class!

And – anything!

Yeah I would feel the same...

It's a reciprocal energy.

It's a reciprocal energy that you get from students.

You're getting something back.

The demands of the job as a HOD in the neo-liberalist university (Harford, 2020) can be overwhelming. Deirdre appears to be taking responsibility on herself due to her perceived lack of confidence and competence, but also her sense of the expectation that she should be constantly looking out for others in her charge (her staff, her students). She feels under pressure to keep everyone happy.

Do you think this job doesn't offer that?

Oh this job is very draining. It just absorbs my energy.

*I find it very draining. I find there's a constant draw on you;
there's a constant sucking of your energy.*

*You're constantly in that looking after needs of others,
always looking after the needs of others.*

Who are never satisfied. Never happy.

One or two people seem to be happy, occasionally,
but they sometimes aren't happy,
a lot of time people aren't happy.

And the money wouldn't matter

And the money doesn't matter to me,

I would walk away from the money

and I know I'm the major wage earner.

I know I have 4 children,

3 of them – 3 of them will be in university next year...

But I know if I give up my job and –

for example I had to go... even... on a third of my wage I would –

I often thought it would be better than... the stress...

I don't really take stress,

but I don't need that burden of the role.

I don't mind the stress, I...

In fact, I would say it's a burden

but it's not necessarily obviously stressful

because I can't be stressed

then I wouldn't be here.

There is a sense here that Deirdre is almost counselling herself– at first, the stress of the role is fine, but then later she admits that it is a burden, after which she talks herself back to a position where it's not stressful and even if it were, she could always walk away. I regret not delving deeper here into this as my response to this level of stress in the role has been to take periods of (unpaid) leave from the role, as did she.

...

It's not a thanks you're looking for, it's a reciprocal energy.

Just a little bit of give back

I – I do think people stay in a role when they're getting something from it.

*The – the day comes when you're getting nothing from it except the negative
then I – I don't believe anyone stays.*

That's the point at which someone says,

"Right, ok, I think I've had enough and I can't do it."

*So if you – if you are staying, and you're able to stay for whatever reason,
despite the burden or the difficulties and the culture,
despite all that, it's because you're getting something out of it.*

Striking a balance between Caring and Empowerment

Do you think that...

...that you want (to do) some sort of caring (with) your staff?

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, yeah, and sometimes

(In my other role)

I think the chance to work with people...

as opposed to staff, means that I can remember again what that's like;

because sometimes when you're not doing that you get –

you move away further and further, and you get harder.

And I think it's sometimes good to stop that and go, y'know,

these are real challenges that people experience.

What I have to experience is nothing. Really...

That caring approach, can that also be kind of draining as well though

if people... if people, say,

that you're constantly looking after their needs?

I wanted to explore this and wonder now was this a bias on my behalf when I asked this question? I think her answer (and the literature) justified it in the sense that it is well established that the imperative to care is gendered (Lynch, 2010).

You have to look at the balance between caring and empowerment,
Y'know, and... sometimes it's not easy to get that mix ...
because sometimes you're trying to be too persuasive that you're not caring
or you're not {just} putting more pressure at a different level.
And it depends on the person and how capable they are,
and where they're at,
and whether they'll be able to take that on board or not.

I Could Tell A Different Story

I'm giving you this story because I'm struggling
I'm k – kind of marginally struggling with work
and trying to keep it all together;
and I suppose I'm giving you all this... this flavour.
If, however, I was to step back from this
That today, and how you'd feel in another...
two – two weeks' time... could be different -
I could even tell you – tell you now,
“Hold on, despite all that I'm saying to you
I am still running the department;”
“I'm still keeping up with people doing it;
I'm still probably more capable
than most people who would be in the department.”
And still getting something from it.
And I must because I wouldn't be sitting here otherwise.
I have a choice to leave if I wanted to.
I really do.
Because... the work won't keep me.
I could always – could always say that story too!

Deirdre's confidence in herself waxes and wanes, depending on how she perceives herself as coping in the role.

There are things that I could improve on.

There are things that I'd like to get better at;

but there's still, at the end of every day,

I make it a point to say

"There'll be one good thing that I come home with this evening."

Be it... I said something nice to somebody

who really needed it to be said at that time...

I reflect – I reflect,

y'know you spoke about the caring element of yours,

I would find I come from that myself.

I do... I do bring – I feel I bring that, that caring element;

but I suppose the question that we might address is:

Is that very much a female thing?

That caring thing, and is that something that women bring to the job:

as opposed to men sometimes, and that would be interesting.

We were both in agreement that we bring 'care' into our day-to-day work, as part of our role but could not say if it was something men in similar positions do, as we can only tell stories of our own lived experiences as women in the role.

Even if I were a man...

I was in a state of, y'know,

'I'm not sure this is all manageable?'

However, now I believe that it is,

and I believe that even if there was a man in my role that they too-

I hadn't thought about this but I'm saying this now-

I believe that a man or a woman would have the same, uhm,

struggles in that aspect.

Struggles...

And I believe that it's about stepping back from that

and saying,

"Hold on a minute now. No, no this is not attainable, really."

Despite the fact that I hadn't a lot of time,
and I'm going to organise my time better etc, but eh...
I think that, uhm, as a woman as well I'm able to do –
I have lots of other roles and responsibilities
that are outside of the Institute;
and... maybe that if I was a man
I wouldn't have
the same responsibilities.

The dual role again for women – care responsibilities outside add to the already heavy workload.

And in some respects I believe
that they actually
add to my ability to be able to stand back
and say,
“None of this is beyond the scope of what's possible”,
And you just have to manage yourself better...
That's right.
And to set up supports for yourself...
That's right.
and to do that...
you take control.

Deirdre appears to be taking the responsibility again for a system that does not support women in the role, for managing her time better and setting up supports for herself.

5.2.2 Molly's Story

Like Dierdre, Molly was a very 'fluent' story-teller, who spoke at great length with little in the way of prompting. We both seemed to 'bury' ourselves in these interview engagements and I found it very easy to immerse myself in them as I related very strongly with Molly's dual ethic of care and professionalism. She had clearly defined areas she wanted to address in her own story and these drove the interviews on. Throughout she presents herself as not only a working woman, but a working mother, who defines her professionalism as being

strongly driven by her care ethic and her commitment to both her staff and her department. Her monologue focuses on the demands of the job negatively impacting on her family life, the conflicts of the dual role, her sense of isolation as a female manager in the 'middle rung', the 'powerlessness' of her role as a middle manager in this system, and the gendered expectation on her as a female Head of Department (HOD) to 'mother' her staff in the workplace. This latter is one which Molly drives home constantly and it is the one which finally led her to transfer out of the role of Head of Department into a more administrative managerial role, without the need to manage academic staff.

A Typical kind of Woman

Before...

I suppose, (I was) a typical kind of woman ...

working full time,

I was having my kids

and I couldn't sustain the job...

with family.

Basically.

That's what dictated the change.

My husband and myself changed careers

after our first child.

So we made the decision

that we didn't want the kids

to go to child minders,

or crèche,

or any... outside of home

care arrangements,

so that we could work.

He's working...

This rebounded with me as I do not have nor never did have this level of support in my home life as a working lone parent.

the opposite to what I work.

So you share it equally?

Yeah, so both of us are with the kids all the time,
and nobody else.

And do you think that was a good decision at the time?

I do, it was the best decision.

That's why the only thing that attracted me

to lecturing was the holidays.

It was family friendly,

and as a woman

having to work full time

The other job involved travelling...

a couple of times a week.

Having to leave

early some mornings

and later other mornings...

We said

"No, we couldn't do it".

Just too difficult. Too hard. Dropping, picking up.

Dropping, picking up...

Racing to be back on time...

So we looked out to see what was possible,

and the lecturing job came up.

I was in management before.

So, it made sense

in terms of what area I'd be lecturing in.

But initially what attracted me

was the long summer holidays,

and the school holidays,

Like Deirdre, a career in academia was conducive to her family commitments, it was perceived as a solution to the dual role that is demanded of her as a working mother.

and all of that.

If I'm to be honest.

And I took a major pay-cut,
at the time.

And you sacrificed your pay...

For the family time?

The Perfect Job for a Mother

*So you're priority, and you're very clear about that,
is your family, your children,
and making your work-life balance
work for your family?*

Yeah, and that's why I always find it very hard,
if an opportunity is on the horizon
for a different position,
I find it very hard not to go for it.

Because I'm always, since I started working really,
and particularly ...since I had a family,
I'm always looking for the perfect job for a mother.
I haven't found it yet.

...

What I would always say

is that feminists

...

created a scenario

where they gave us two jobs, not one.

We're forced to hold down now two full time jobs.

This should have been explored more with Molly in the interviews.

*Because family time is full time.
It can never be anything else.
Family commitments are full time.
They might be squeezed in after 6,
on Saturdays or Sundays...*

A mother...in full-time work,
I think it's harder than a man working full-time.
It's quite a sexist thing to say,
but I think that's the reality.

*But I think when you have that instinct,
the looking after your family comes first.*

You begin to resent the work
if you have to go on to email...
I'm shouting and roaring
at my kids to get to bed
so I can {go to} the computer.

...

And lecturing...
didn't encroach as much?
No,
never happened.

The Search

I thought about it

Molly comes across as conflicted between seeking out challenge in her career and making that ambition compatible with her home life.

and said,
Well, again it's the search.
This could be the one that I'm going to love,
and it'll justify my absence from home.
And y'know I'll be so happy in the job.
That the house will be happier at home,
because I'll be coming home satisfied and happier.
Do you know what I mean?
The... happy ever after.

But that didn't work out.

She is not a part of us

For that first while I'd say
the staff were looking at me going,
"Who is she?"
And why is she here?
Why would anyone decide
to put her here,
because
she hasn't the background.
Is there integrity to giving her the position?
Will she be able to represent us,
and promote us
and fight for us?"
"Because she's not part of us".

Putting the work in.

And I had the same thoughts.

The second major story running through Molly's narrative is the sense of being separate and disconnected from the bulk of the lecturing staff as a HOD, yet not supported or really a 'pat of' the predominantly male senior team. This resonated strongly with me, this sense of distance and otherness' form staff.

Will I be able to fight for them?

Will I be able to represent them?

Will I be able to talk the talk when I need to talk it?"

And did you find that was a barrier... when you started?

Definitely at the start.

It was a mix of me having kind of a doubt about that,

and me experiencing doubt from staff about it.

So they kind of reacted with each other?

I think so, yeah.

Like Deirdre, Molly exhibits a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the organisation and to furthering the interests of her department. She wants the respect of her staff.

When do you think that doubt disappeared for you?

There was only a few months of it really.

Yeah, because I kind of buried myself

in the ...programmes.

So I started reading up on it

and understanding them and just

educated myself on it really.

It didn't take that long,

and once I knew I knew the 'ins and outs',

and started talking to people about it

then there wasn't an issue then really.

That just sort of...

dissolved.

And the staff recognised that you had put the work in?

Yeah!

They recognised

that I'd (gone) to the bother...

It's all very grey.

I actually don't think

you can manage academic staff.
I don't think you can manage them.
And that's not just because
some of them might have contrary personalities.
It's because the way the system is set up...
you can't require them...
you can only require them to do very little.

In the management role
you can manage... their teaching.
In the sense that you can manage
maybe the classroom
but after that it's all very –
it's all very grey
about what they will
or they won't do.

The IoTs are highly unionised and this is a distinguishing feature, a legacy of the old RTC structure (Loxley, 2014). It places the HOD in a middle-ranking, relatively 'powerless' role (Foucault) as the very unique recruitment and employment practices can be difficult to negotiate as a manager of academic staff.

*You're almost facilitating
the academic to perform their task. Their job.*

For the first few years in the job
I felt I was only facilitating the department,
Just facilitating for it to happen.
I was just supporting it to happen,
with them actually, almost, the lead if you like.

Because they have so much power
and control
and free-reign.

....

Because they're highly organised.

And because the upper-management...

I don't think supports the middle-management
to manage the academic staff
in any real way.

So the power equation is imbalanced?

It's imbalanced, yeah.

They have become the more powerful, really.

I think it's unhealthy.

I think people should have initiative
and be allowed, y'know...

fly with certain ideas, and all of that.

But not to the extent that they are actually in control
and people are nearly afraid to challenge them
or question them;
and they're left off
to do whatever they like.

There isn't a sense of 'we'

There isn't a sense of 'we';

there's a sense of 'I'.

The system has created people
who start sentences
with 'I'
rather than
'we'.

*The academic –
their loyalty is to their discipline,
to themselves,
to the subject,
to their students.
It's all about the 'I'.
Could it be different?*

Collegiality...

It doesn't happen between levels.
I know that a lot of... academic staff
have a great sense of togetherness,
but...
there isn't a sense of 'we'
with me as head of department
and 'us' as the academic staff.
It's 'we' the academic staff,
it's them.

*Individualism and the lack of trust in management,
both features of the neo-liberalist university, feature
as a strong thread in Molly's story.*

There wasn't even a reputation preceding me..

When I stepped into the Head of Department job,

...

I was a complete stranger to them.

They hadn't even heard of me.

There wasn't even a reputation preceding me.

But they had the measure of you

because you were head of department?

Only because I was in management,
so if I'm in management I have to be...
a certain thing.
Which was negative.
I couldn't potentially
be positive anyway.

That was the start.

Divisions

'We', management and staff, 'we'.

But that 'we' is not here...

That the leadership is poor from...

the top.

Why would people

mistrust management,

all management,

unless they have reason to...

to distrust it,

historically?

...

People decided management

{are} people to be distrusted,

because that's been their experience.

Or that's what they've heard.

Negative interactions

with senior management

have created a culture

that's just...

impossible to break down.

....

I think there's a divide.

There's certainly a divide,

...

where I've made an effort to...

kind of talk to other heads of department...

I've made relationships myself

but the structure and the systems

don't actually lend themselves to that at all.

Molly like Deirdre has tried to forge relationships to overcome the deficits of the system in terms of the divisions that exist between academic staff and management.

Sounding Board

But there actually (are) no opportunities,

as head of department,

there's no opportunity

to bitch and moan.

I know that sounds terrible...

but, everybody needs to let off the steam

and say the things they can't say

in the meeting in front of the person.

It's just...

human nature,

y'know that you want to say,

"Jesus Christ! That 'B' or that 'whatever'

I know... (laughter)

Or

"I could've torn her hair out",

or whatever it might be

I recall us both sharing a conspiratorial laugh at this point. We don't want to be disrespectful of staff, but sometimes out of frustration, we might just like to 'let off steam,' as it were. But there are no systems in place for that kind of (emotional) peer support.

you don't really mean it
but you just need to let it go!
You need to kind of say it.
Clear your head out,
articulate it,
and then just go back
and start again...
But there's nowhere to do that!

...

The systems, they don't allow –
They don't recognise it –
because it's male dominated.
From the top,
they don't see the need for it
or the purpose of it.

Molly declares through her experience that as senior management is male dominated, there is no culture of support in terms of emotional support for middle managers, as they just do not see the need for it.

Competent and caring

Senior management is predominately male.
And middle management is predominately female.
So they recognise the need to have the woman
caring for the ones on the ground,
listening to their moaning
and their groaning,
but they won't listen to it.
But they recognise,
the men recognise,
the need for a woman
to be in place to do that

Expectation of female 'caring' in the workplace. Women taking on the low status work, a trend which has become more visible in the neo-liberalist university, whilst the senior male management team appear to studiously avoid it and rely on female managers to take it on.

because if they didn't
they wouldn't have so many
female heads of department {now}.
So by having female heads
they're not listening
to the moaning and groaning
of academic staff,
because we're listening to it;
because we're women.
It's our job to listen to it, because we're women.

Is it mothers?

*I'm very independent and motivated,
and will get on with the job.*

Is it just mothers?

Is it back to that mothering thing?

Is it back to the fact that we're...

mothers who are used to working hard
and used to holding down two full-time jobs.

And we just want to come in,

get on with the job,

and go home.

We're multi-taskers.

We... manage situations,

we do it without thinking,

without looking for help.

We just want to get on and do it and get out.

So we're not going to take an hour out of our day

to be calling (our line manager) to sit down and go through it.

This resonated strongly with me. Molly and I talked this out together, as we are both mothers and in this co-construction, we found ourselves equating the gendered expectation of female HODS to 'mind' our staff to mothering outside of the home.

We just haven't the time for that.
We don't have time for lunch.
We don't have time for coffee
because we need to come in,
do the job,
and get home to our children.

Not a job for a mother

He asked me

"Would I be interested in {a senior management} job?"

"No!" I said,

"No, because... it is not a job for a mother.

It is a job for a woman, or a man,
but not a job for a mother."

There's a difference between a female and a mother.

A woman brings a particular perspective

but a mother brings a whole other perspective into a scenario...

She wants to get in, work (hard), and go home,

but she doesn't want to carry it home with her when she goes home.

She wants to avoid bringing it home,

to the family home,

bringing it into the weekends.

So in order to facilitate that we work morning to evening

without breaks,

and we don't want the conversations

and the handovers

and the "help me with this, help me with that."

We just do it.

We just do the job.

The demands of the dual role can impede career advancement.

An Impossible Job

*The way that the job has... developed over the past couple of years,
that it has become... a good job for a female?*

I don't think it's a good job for anyone necessarily.

I don't think it's healthy for a male or female.

To be honest.

In terms of the workload.

So whether you're a man or a woman I think it's a difficult job,

because the systems and the structures...

make it... make it an impossible job.

Whether you're a man or a woman.

We are not saying here that the job of HOD is any more difficult for women over men - it can seem like an impossible job for both in the current climate. However, women tend to have the conflict of family commitments as well as the additional burden of the expectation that they will do the administrative 'housekeeping' and the 'minding' of, and caring for, staff that seems not to be asked of men in the role.

A hundred and ten ways to get ahead...

...

*I would feel very strongly that there's patterns of interactions
that have become... allowable*

and that by being a woman almost enforces it.

Whereas other patterns of behaviour

with a male head of department would be very different.

...

Is it because we don't want people to speak badly about us?

We probably don't want people to think that we're just a...

y'know, a hard bitch of career woman.

You want to show that there's a little bit of humanity.

Yeah because you can only ever be one or the other,

a woman in a management:

you can either be a cold-hearted bitch

Role conflict as female HODs

or an absolute doormat!

A doormat!

There isn't anything in between!

Are we struggling with which are we going to be?

Which are we supposed to be?

And it's nicer to be the doormat,

in a way,

because y'know –

some people might give you some positive –

you've more chance of getting something positive.

But you've no hope at all if you're the other one.

And yet would you be respected more if you were the other way?

By upper management?

{And} if there was, y'know...

a hundred and ten ways to get ahead,

one of them would not be...

The doormat.

No, or the human ornament,

or the one who says

"Look, its ok. I'll organise lunch."

We're here to listen to you

Why do we... why do we... create that kind of persona

of the 'human' and the 'doormat'

and "we're here to listen to you",

when we don't want to listen to them.

Why do we do it?

When they actually leave the room and I go,

"Did I really want to listen to that person... for half an hour?"

About something that I had no control over
and I could do nothing about.

Why did I entertain her?

Why do you think we do it?

Do we do it because we want to be liked in some way?

Are we kind of half-ashamed that we're in management...

Almost apologising?

Apologising.

"I don't really want to be {here}

and I don't like the upper management.

Don't see me like that!

I'm the really nice one over here,

and I'll listen to your moaning

and he won't."

What is it?

Are we almost not comfortable in the management role?

To assert ourselves and say,

"I won't listen to that now because

there's no point listening to what you're saying,

because I cannot do anything about it."

Or is it that we're not comfortable with what it is seen as,

what good management is seen as?

Which is cold... y'know, male?

We're not comfortable with it because we're not like that.

We're not naturally like that.

So are we going too far the other direction so... ?

But would they pull out of the men?

Those days that I find {the most} difficult,

Wanting to be liked by staff, to be seen as nice and not like senior management?

Conflicted perhaps with how we should be in the role (more stereotypical male behaviour) and how we want to be as women in the role, but we pay a price for that.

when I find people are pulling out of me.

All of the time pulling out of me –

Sucking you dry –

Give, give, give!

And there's nothing coming back y'know,

that I find very hard

and it's like...

it's like 30 children pulling out of you,

and it's hard.

But why are they pulling out of us?

Why is it acceptable...

that it's ok for them to

pull,

pull,

pull?

But would they pull out of the men?

That's... a very good question.

I think they don't.

I don't get that sense...

from some of my male colleagues –

I would say that they're not putting up with any of that.

I would suggest that they're not putting up with it...

that they wouldn't entertain it.

They wouldn't!

They're not interested.

They wouldn't entertain it!

I don't want to do the mothering anymore

I don't want to do the mothering anymore,

Molly's expresses extreme frustration at the expectation that she 'mother and mind' staff which is not the case with men she suspects.

I've had enough of it.
That's part – of them.
And for me...
definitely the critical point
is the constant giving
and (I'm) tired of (the) looking after.
You get worn out.
You get worn out.
You'll be sucked dry.
There's nothing left.
Because with children they grow up.
Yeah, and these don't.
And as they grow up their needs change but...
these don't seem to.
These don't.
There's no development.
You could be in the same job,
and I've been in it a long time and I –
I see no change.
I see no difference,
I see no growth.
I don't see...
I don't see that relationship changing.
I've tried in... innumerable ways
to try change that dynamic;
but it seems to always come back.

But when I look back over it...
the reason I'm leaving (the job) -

Molly articulates this to herself for the first time as a result of the interviews. I regret not probing this more thoroughly at the time.

and it's only that I'm sitting here now
that I'm saying all these things about mothering -
I just don't want...
I want to mother my own children and not them.
And I've mothered them.
For years, and they've all...
they felt positive about me
because they felt mothered.
Because I listened to them day in day out.
To my own sacrifice at the end really.
I sacrifice myself...
for it.
I definitely sacrificed myself,
because I was somebody else for (those) years...
I resent myself for letting it happen.
Not them.
I let it happen.
I let them suck me dry, and they have sucked me dry...
You let it happen, I think,
because the demands are so high
you don't actually have time...
to think...

It's no job.

Well you asked me "what's the ideal job for a mother?"
It's no job.
No job outside the home.
And people kind of say,
"God you've been working all your life",

and I say, "I have no... choice."
I actually firmly believe that feminists,
y'know...
all they did was give us two jobs.
That is what feminism did for women.
They gave us two jobs.

*Certainly I find I come home in the evening
and I take 10 minutes
and then I'm straight into...
Dinners, and activities, and homework, and shopping.
You still have your mother role.
It's extremely hard {to juggle} ...
To manage both, to manage both.*

*This was my experience for many years
when my own daughter was growing up
through her primary schooling. She
went (was sent?) to boarding school at
second level.*

And there is no doubt that the majority of males in our role...
for the majority of them
they do not have those care responsibilities,
at home.

5.2.3 Jane's Story

Jane expresses her extreme frustration with the demands of the role throughout her story – the excessive 'busyness' and organisational housework that her role demands. She is very committed to the organisation, perhaps even moreso than to the department she has been assigned to, and she expresses her sense of role-conflict between operating in a more analytical way as a result of her STEM training and career path, rather than in a way that is more associated with a female Head of Department, which she senses is what the staff

expected when she took over from the previous incumbent. Jane's identity appears to be very much attached to her role as 'breadwinner' of the family, and her experience working alongside males as peers from a relatively young age. This she feels should give her a sense of comfort in her role as Head of Department in terms of the competencies necessary to take on the role but finds that she still feels ill-equipped not only to meet the excessive administrative demands but also the substantial interpersonal element that she may not have expected.

Falling into it

Had you gone for it before?

No, I had never gone for it.

Never any interest in it.

And what possessed you, if you don't mind me asking?

If that's not a loaded question?

It's just... I sit down for coffee with my Head of School.

In July, I was in to see a student.

She was late, he was sitting there.

I thought, 'Oh God, I better sit with him...'

And that was it.

You said, 'Ok, I'll go for it'

I actually felt guilty.

Guilty because... there wasn't any headship?

Yeah, y'know, yeah... basically.

There was a vacuum in the department...no leadership?

Well, yeah...exactly.

Yeah, but he didn't guilt me into it

But I suppose... I do feel guilty over everything that happens.

Sense of guilt and responsibility towards the department and the organisation, mirrors that expressed by Deirdre.

Similarly, I regret not exploring this issue more in the interviews.

And he said 'it was (just an) acting²⁹ (position)'.

I said "Ok sure I'll do what I can."

Very confident that...

It's three-four months

and there'll be someone else in to do it.

Then...I think I just kind of

fell into it.

The Breadwinner

I've always been in a male dominated environment.

I mean, I would have {had} my master's programme ...

We were the class everyone talked about

because it was only three females.

When I worked in my first job,

my first permanent job,

it was in the chemical factory

where only admin staff were female.

General operatives and the managers

were all male.

...

Now {I do} a lot of consultancy

... in the construction industry as well.

Again, very male dominated

and that would have been

one of my selling points.

That I could...

²⁹ Not a permanent position but in an acting role for a fixed period of time or covering for a permanent staff member who may be out on leave.

*That you could work
with men as peers.
It's interesting
that your background
in many ways
has inured you to...
the different experience.*

...

I suppose I (am) 4th generation working female ...
as in being the main
or the joint breadwinner.

My grandmother and great-grandmother
would have been widows
and so would've taken over the whole thing.

My mother would've taught...
she would've been the main bread winner...

My grandfather was injured in the war,
so he actually was a house-husband.

My grandmother was a public health nurse.

So nurses and teachers?

And farmers and God knows what,
but you know
they would have done that
from when they were young.

Problem-solving

I suppose I like the problem solving.
Y'know, you meet the student yourself...
And an awful lot of the time

student problems are just
that they haven't heard
what's being said to them
over and over again.

{And} timetabling allocations³⁰.

I enjoy that.

I love taking time with allocations

It's one of the tasks I like.

*I think the problem-solving is kind of interesting
because you come from that techie background,
and I have a ... science background myself,
so I like the problem solving element too.*

Being able to put things in motion...

I like procedures.

I like having structure around things.

The ability to...to maybe put in
what I (think) would be the best.

What would 'work'?

Yes, exactly.

*Jane recognises her skillset as being
problem- solving, more analytical and
computational, which she feels gives her an
advantage as a woman in the role. This
resonated somewhat with me as I come
from a similar analytical background.*

Honeymoon

Was there a kind of a honeymoon period for a little while?

It was straight in.

I thought there would actually be training...

I thought someone would explain to you...

Because of my background

I know... procedures.

*I recognise this as my bias. I expected a
honeymoon period, a gentle settling in,
but that was not the case.*

³⁰ A key responsibility for a Head of Department in the IoT sector is allocating of staff timetables

I know all that side of the house
a lot better than most people.
But if...if I didn't know that,
some of my first running of exam boards,
dealing with student registration issues,
It suddenly dawned on me
that if I didn't know what I knew....
How would I have coped?

*You are given an office.
There is no training,
no induction.
Absolutely nothing.
I wonder how on earth did we actually do it?*

Fixing & Mending

I spend a lot of time fixing things ...
and people see it maybe as a criticism.
of what went on before.
When I do see a problem
it's not to do with blame or anything
but I'm looking for the solution.
Straight away...
When there are things that need to be fixed.
It has to be fixed.

Jane is analytical, a 'fixer and mender'. This is a slightly different perspective to Molly (and to some extent Deirdre) who sees the role as being one in which she has to 'mother' and 'care for' staff. Jane feels an impetus to intervene and 'fix' situations for her staff. This could be seen however as organisational 'housework' or localised problem-solving that is kept at departmental level, meaning the senior (male dominated) staff do not have to take it on.

When {a programme} isn't validated³¹

³¹ In the IOT sector, there is a lengthy set of procedures to follow to develop a new programme and ensure that it is validated by QQI before it can be offered as part of the organisation's suite of HE programmes.

or isn't working
or isn't running
or isn't bringing {in} any students.
You have to do something.
And you have to keep {people}
on-board
with everything,
Without looking backward
and feeling that it's a criticism.

The neo-liberalist agenda to commodify the outputs of H.E

They think they're doing it for the right reason

I've spent a lot of time mending bridges for them
that they don't even know they've crashed.

They're unaware of the fall out,
Unaware that they've insulted God knows how many people.

They think it was...y'know.

That it was ok.

That it was no big deal.

Helping or hindering?

They ask forgiveness (rather) than permission.

They run with ideas that they think are...

Super.

In good faith

and with the best (of) intentions.

(So it's never) as good as it could have been,

with a more unified, coherent, approach to it.

And better skill.

Jane's preference is for a more strategic, analytical approach to problem solving within her Department but sometimes she feels she has to compromise that to keep her staff on board.

Keeping everyone happy

I do find the personal and the interpersonal skills that are needed to just keep things ticking along very draining.

If I was to pick one thing that drains me most, it is my belief that I'm not living up to people's expectations of me.

Or that I'm letting people down.

Or I'm criticizing peoples' work from previously.

Or I'm not doing enough (to support)} someone's work.

And I find that very draining.

Because y'know I have friends on the staff as well, and a lot of students, and it's very difficult to keep them all happy.

Molly, Deidre and Jane all say they feel 'drained', or emotionally exhausted by the demands (emotional) of the role.

Grand Central Station

The head of department's {office} is like Grand-Central Station.

Everything is tunnelled through here.

Someone sends an email and the sending of that email to me

Neo liberalist agenda and the adoption of new managerialism – 'busyness', endless administration and auditing.

means

it's my responsibility now.

It's not theirs.

I have come to the realization

That I {have} created a monster...

Responding,

fixing a problem,

moving in fast

and saying

"Right let's fix it",

and now the expectation is

that {I} actually will fix it.

Instead of sitting back a little bit

and accepting

that I can't fix every problem.

{that} I can't make everybody's situation right

in each and every day.

(They) feed this machine

that I have created

(myself).

Long Days

I'm in here past 8 o'clock.

Which are long days.

They're long days but, in those long days

I can't get everything done.

I just can't.

Good Will Hunting or the Path of Least Resistance

Am I relying on the good will of a few people here all the time?

*I had been letting him (lecturer) do work that maybe somebody else...
should have been doing.*

And when I get those little...mirror moments

I know I've fallen into the trap

of using really good people to the point

that I may be abusing really good people;

And that makes me feel really bad.

The day is so long

and you're doing so much

that you take the easiest path,

the path of least resistance.

I'm glad somebody does say something back to me;

because I won't recognize it otherwise...

*It's really important we are able to hear
constructive criticism...*

That's not always easy because

you need a supportive network for that.

I can take it from some people...

{but} I wonder if I {could} take it from others?

I'm not sure I could.

*I'd be highly indignant if particular people
came with criticisms.*

Leaping and Lurching

I've never actually seen it without some crisis or other.

I don't think... I have had a year where I {had} the space to develop...

Not just fearing criticism, but actively needing the support of academic staff to do the job. Without it, in the IoT sector, the HOD role becomes an almost undoable job. The power, as Molly has observed, lies with them.

to progress the things I'd like to do.

I am leaping and lurching
from one crisis to the next.

You find a...
vacuum of space.

The job expands
so (even) if you get help...
the rest of your time expands into this job,
because there have been things you haven't been doing
that you suddenly start (to) try and do.

Your expectations of yourself... increases.

Our expectations we place on 'self' increase rather than acknowledging that the system itself needs to change.

Falling into bad habits

I think habits develop over time.
And you fall into the role,
and perhaps you fall into how it was done before
and before {that},
and before {that again}.

Yet the role has changed,
the number of students is bigger
and the number of staff hours are bigger.

*{But} you're performing the same way
and acting the same way
that someone in the job would have done 5 or 10 years ago.*

{But} it's a completely different place.

"You Need a Break"

Your job just never seems to stop.

I took a week off... and I went to Donegal.

Neo liberalism and the adoption of new-managerialism has changed the organisational culture of the HEI, but there has been little in the way of acknowledging that as HODs we might need training to support us in that transition.

To stay in a place with there's no mobile service, no wifi...
You could only get mobile service in one of the bedrooms.
I spent most of the time either in the car driving
so I could talk on the phone
or standing in that corner.

People knew I was on holiday.

They knew I was away.

They said

"Oh God you definitely need a break."

What is it that screams out that we're not human beings?

That we don't warrant any space or time,
or sleep space or rest space.

What is it about the role that people think
it's not a human being that's in the role?

This story mirrors Molly's story - she feels like she is not treated like a human being with feelings and a personal life by her staff sometimes.

No Carrot, No Stick

The head of department is much more of a facilitator than a manager.

We don't manage.

*We have not {got} the incentive,
nothing really...*

No carrot or stick.

We facilitate the lecturers and students to get on with their job
and the education programmes that we put in place.

That's how I see it.

We're not managers as such.

And then,

the expectation that we would manage everything

Women in management in HE are mostly found in the middle rung, where there is little executive power, and this is very evident in the IoT sector in particular.

and have the... final say
isn't the case.
There's a whole level of senior management above us
who take those decisions,
or don't as the case may be...

Keeping everybody happy.

*This constant pressure
to keep human beings happy
and if there were no human beings here
it would be much more straight forward.*

Human beings are complicated
and emotions are complicated and...
people can be very well meaning,
but procedures have to be followed

and if they're not followed there's all kinds of fallout...

Colleague's fallout with each other,
that creates terrible unhappiness
and a lot of tension and stress...
It can gnaw away...
It can fester and fester
and an awful lot of bad feeling
can be created very quickly.

What skills do we have to fix that?

*The 'understory' here I think is the expectation
that as women HODs we will keep people happy
and manage any disharmony amongst the staff
so that it is contained.*

Very few.

Significant Change

We're going through a significant time of change
because we've had to...

Introducing that kind of change does create conflict.

It does create misunderstanding almost, no matter {what}...

{I think} we've been very clear on the communication,

and providing all the information,

and explaining how and why...

and still the rumours.

You can't underestimate people's capacity

to be hurt about things;

it might be because they're professional identity

is very wrapped up (in it).

They're lecturers,

autonomous,

independent,

in their classroom.

They can hurt very easily...

They can be ... self-critical,

unnecessarily so

because

it's not always about them.

Jane's institution was going through the beginnings of a merger process at the time of the interviews. She felt her role was to mediate, to manage the staff through change, to work with the 'hurt' and the emotion engendered in department staff.

5.2.4 Julie's Story

I found Julie's interviews to be very engaging. She comes across as very highly motivated and an exceptionally hard worker who brings a positive, creative energy to any project she takes on. Her story focuses on her collaborative way of working with her staff. She likes to support and encourage, akin to Deirdre's 'empowerment', but can be firm if the job demands it. She takes great issue with the organisational culture (new-managerialist) that has created a disconnected and seemingly disaffected senior management who take little interest in what is happening within departments, at a level that matters to academic staff. She resents the isolation and disconnect the role brings, and the sense of being stifled with little power to enact projects and bring her ideas to fruition. Her belief that she did not fit the mould that the role demands led her to step away and seek opportunities in another sector.

Open All Hours ³²

I've always worked outside,
not in an official capacity...
I guess I'm the type
who has to have hands
in a number of different pots.
...
I mean our work ethic
when we were young was
you get up in the morning,
and you work all day
and we all worked from very young...
...

³² This poem is worked in full in Chapter 4, but an excerpt is included here again as it sets out Julie's character as a very hard working, self-motivated individual.

That was something I found
difficult to deal with
when I was in the college.
That people...
when there's a job needs doing
they don't do it when it needs to be done.

...

whereas to me if something is worthwhile doing at the time
then it's relevant to me.
I find people who have that mentality
shouldn't be doing what they're doing.
I really think they should be out of the place...

There were tears

*When you were head of department,
was that an easy thing to do to say to somebody 'Why not?'
Were you (ever) in a position where you had to say 'Why not?'*
I don't think I ever had to.
That's impressive.

I mean I had to make decisions
where people didn't want to do things
and I told them they had to do them,
there wasn't an option.
There were tears and that,
and then they would leave,
but we'd meet 5 minutes later and still have a coffee.
I would normally confront those issues,
I would say

*Julie comes across as confident in her own
Interpersonal skills, her ability to
communicate and her preference for
collaboration. Even when faced with difficult
decisions, she is very person-centred.*

“I think there’s something wrong between us
because of what happened.
I’m not happy about that.”
I would sit down and I would say
“I don’t like working like that.
So say it out now
and it’ll be done and dusted,
and that’ll be in the past
and we can move on again.”
That’s what I would do.
... they would say
“Well I don’t think it’s fair that you would did that”
and I might say
“But somebody else had to do exactly the same”.
You know, I’d balance it.

I think that’s important.
I’m asking people all the time
to do things that are probably
above and beyond what they’re...
to say, contracted to do.

In the IoT sector, the nature of the employment contracts for lecturing staff are very specific, down to the contracted weekly hours and the specification of duties. So it is very difficult to be creative sometimes within the confines of these contracts and the HOD is constantly negotiating.

In Praise of People

So we’d have people
who’d have never gotten involved...
normally what I would do is
...
I would see the area each of them (was) interested in.
I would get (them) involved in a project

that was playing (to) their strengths and their interests.

Em...If they're interested they'd be doing it
and not considering it work.

What I think is very important,
which doesn't happen here especially,
is that people aren't appreciated enough
and they aren't told,
"That was brilliant and a good job doing it.
It was amazing"

I think that doesn't happen
and I think it should.

....

As Head of Department,
praising people and giving them
recognition for what they do
and promoting what they've done...

*I would agree, that with good people,
that you support
and want to keep on board with you,
a bit of praise,
a bit of acknowledgement
and a bit of encouragement,
like "thanks for that, that was a great job"*

....

there's a few people that do a lot and they're high profile;
and then what happens to people that don't
is that they get hidden a bit.

She expresses a great desire to really understand how people work best and likes to manage in a way that staff work to their strengths.

Like Julie, I like to praise and acknowledge the good work that staff do. In the IoT system, there can be little to reward those who go the extra mile.

What I try do I suppose is that...
people that wouldn't normally be given high profile
is get them involved with something...

and I would always acknowledge
what they'd have done.

I would always send an email
to the department or the school and say
"Well done to such and such a person."

I would acknowledge if something good happened,
but if something (bad) happened I would have dealt with it on an individual basis.

A Vision for Things

(My line manager...
We had a very good working relationship;
I suppose she gave me a lot of free reign.
So if I had ideas, or I saw areas
or niches that we weren't really delivering
I'd go to her and say
"Look, I have an idea for this."
Sometimes she'd say
"Oh my God almighty"
and I'd say
"We'll just pilot it" ...
And see how it goes ...
laughter...
And then of course, the pilot would continue.

Julie describes a good working relationship with a female Head of School (HOS), with whom she had a strong personal and professional bond, which was mutually beneficial for her and her department.

I'd say there was great trust between us
and trust is important.
I think it's important you trust
the people you're working with.
You trust them so that when you give them something
(they'll) not chicken out on it;
because you trust them
and you know that they'll do it.
You also trust them because if something goes wrong
that they'll come back and tell you,
so you can talk that out.
There's nothing worse than
if they're afraid
or thinking they can't come in and tell you
because there'll be more drama.
Things go wrong all the time
but there's damage limitation
and the earlier you know they've gone wrong
the sooner you can rectify them.
I think that kind of relationship is important,
and we'd always had...
I think she would have trusted me.
I think, em, she would have known that I probably
would have a vision for things.
...
I love doing new things, innovative things.

Julie like Dierdre and Molly seems to really value relationship and building trust.

Opportunities to take on co-ordination or project leadership roles, (both Jane and Francis) can provide a basis for promotion to headship roles.

It was Personal

It was personal

that I went for Head of Department.

It wasn't anything to do with...

really wanting it.

I was doing a lot (of) managing at that stage,

unofficially...

but I had no aspirations to move.

HOD roles can appear to suit women as they can be more flexible than lecturing in the IoT sector. I made the same decision for my family, as did Molly and Deirdre above.

It was personal,

because I needed flexibility

for the kids and things like that.

So I thought it would be easier.

In my naivety,

so I suppose I applied

and I couldn't believe I got it.

Julie, like Deirdre, doesn't see herself as ambitious. She went for the role for family reasons.

It was my first interview in however many years.

Actually, it was only when I was filling out the application

that I realised how many projects I had done.

It was something I'd never thought about.

So, I applied

and I got the job anyway.

So Quiet

I found it very strange

because I (had been) in an office with a group of people,

suddenly...

I wanted to stay in the office actually,

This resonated very strongly with me. Promotion to HOD can bring about a sense of isolation from peers, and this can serve to put women off.

but they told me I couldn't.
I was sitting on my own in the office,
and it was so quiet...
and people only came to the office when they had a problem.
I found it quite, initially,
isolated.

I can't talk to you now

I remember the first day,
because I got offered the job on a Friday,
and the first day I met someone in the carpark
which of course I never thought anymore about it.
People were very kind to me,
don't get me wrong,
and congratulated me...

But I met somebody
and I said
"How are you",
and she said
"Oh, I can't talk to you now
because you're management.
I can't tell you what the problem is."
I said "What?!"
and I honestly couldn't believe it;
because I never felt like that myself about management,
ever.

This mirrors Molly's story of the lack of trust in management, and the disconnect between lecturing staff and management in the sector.

Them and Us

*So... when you took up the job,
was {there} a sense of isolation
and that when people come to you
it's because they only really
needed you
for something?*

Yeah.

Suddenly there was a 'them and us',
because you're management now,
we can't talk to you.

Yeah! I (had) never felt like that, but

....

It was just the fact I couldn't be in the office
with the group,
my normal group...

And saying that we went out and...

You had a good relationship with them?

Yeah, but that was probably because

I didn't know exactly what I was supposed to do.

So I said to (my boss) - "What am I supposed to do?"

(There was) no training or classes.

She said "See how it goes"

and she used to meet me and we'd go through things.

Then of course I had a passion for things

I had to do.

*I remember when I started,
and what was it that [a Lecturer] said to me? ...
I was sitting in the office,
and my office had no windows...
I opened the door and I said to him,
“What am I supposed to do?”*

Well I felt the same!

*Yeah and he said
“Don’t worry it’ll come to you,
they’ll come to you”,
and that’s exactly what it was.
People came looking for something
and the job never changed really,
it was just people looking for something,
and I remember that very clearly.*

There was no training, no induction for the role. It appears to be understood by staff to be a role that ‘facilitates’ others, one of service to others.

A Job Description?

There was no guidelines
I was given, no training.
... [my boss] sat with me
and certainly would have been supporting me.

I suppose I was very unsure in the beginning,
because I wasn’t from [that] background and I was Head...

So I went into the first meeting...

I remember (my boss) coming in and saying,

Julie is comfortable exposing her vulnerability and her lack of particular experience. This rebounded with me as I never felt comfortable doing that myself.

“Can you handle the first meeting?

Everyone, this is (Julie). I’m going.”

I said,

“Ok. As you all know I don’t know the first thing about (this area)

and I’m relying on all of you to teach me everything you know;

and they all said

“We will, don’t worry.”

Disconnection

I found it difficult with people

being so apathetic,

{at} the management level,

and not having a clue

what the normal lecture staff were doing.

That they were so out of tune

and had a lack of vision and creativity,

in the upper management.

that I found it difficult to cope with.

There’s a massive disconnect...

maybe it’s been so many years

since they’ve been in a class

and so many years

since they’ve had

contact

with students.

The distance and disconnect between middle and senior management is highlighted here.

Being a Woman

Being a woman I don’t really think...

I suppose the negative thing

is that they'd think you'd 'get things'

because you're a woman.

You'd get something?

Yeah, they'd associate like,

"Oh they won't say no to your course",

you know.

Kind of like a sexual thing,

And

"If your skirt is a bit shorter you'll get a bit more",

This sort of...

insinuation, you know?

That certainly, a bit...

but I'm sure you do too.

*No *laughter**

I don't think I get that one.

Fight your own corner

I think the feeling...

would be that they would not support you.

Upper management does not support middle management;

if there's issues involved you're left to fight your own corner.

There's staff issues, you know,

it's the worst position to be in I suppose because

you're dealing with above and below.

I think that you wouldn't have

confidence

in them supporting you

if you feel you've done something right;

Julie is the only participant who made any reference to her sexuality as a woman in the role. She did not expand on it beyond this however.

Julie talked for some time on the lack of support for middle managers or HODs in her institution. Senior management is predominantly male and women are mostly located in the middle layer in the IoT sector so this lack of support could be construed as gendered.

And if you feel you've done something wrong then I feel you should say,
"I made the wrong decision"
but when you know you have done something right
and you don't think they support it...

I think upper management see it as two sides.

So for example when I went back as a lecturing (role) I got-
"Ah, you've shown your true cards."
...I've turned sides
because I became management;
(and) because I didn't continue as head of department.

Was it almost like a betrayal? Did they feel betrayed?

Yes I think they did probably...
yeah, you know...
They asked, "What can we do to make you stay?"
and I said
"I've had enough of that."

Stifling

I suppose [my female boss] leaving was a big issue
from the point of view of the working relationship...
but I suppose we had a new Head of School [male]
So we would've operated in a very different (way)...
but operating in a very bureaucratic system
and having everything pre-approved,

When Julie's female boss (Head of School) with whom she had a good relationship, left the organisation, Julie felt her creative energy and independent thinking to be stifled under her new (male) Head of School who saw the HOD role as being more administrative and audit-driven, as per the new-managerialist model.

I couldn't.

It would stifle me
and I couldn't work in that way,
and I knew it would get me in trouble.
I knew he wouldn't be happy
and that I wouldn't be happy.

*So you could see down the line
that there was going to be friction?*

I could see that...
No, it would've worked
but I would have been constantly on edge
about whether I checked things
or double-checked things.
I could have worked in that system
but I didn't want to. **(31:00)**

It's not you.

It's not me,
no.

Fitting into the mould

And so when I'm downtown and somebody says to me
"I have a great idea for a project",
I'll say
"Brilliant. Yeah, we'll do it."
Whereas I'm not the type of person to say,
"Ok, I'll come back to you in a month

and I've put in a pre-proposal
and I've cost it out,
and I'll get approval
and come back to you then."

To me we waste and lose more business doing that.

You lose valuable time because that is the way it's done.

It is yeah

and I do realize we're a public sector,
and we have to be accountable.

I realize all that...

but that's what I find hard to fit into
and I still do.

I find it hard to fit into the mould
that they want me to fit into
and I always did.

It's probably a problem that I have
and not them as such, but I think
by fitting into the mould
you lose
what makes you good at something.

So do you think it's a bit stifling?

Utterly. Utterly. Utterly stifling.

5.2.5 April's Story

Because I did not have April's interview recorded and transcribed (See Chapter 4), I experimented with the 're-creation' of the interview experience as a creative non-fiction story (Kim, 2016), a format that allowed me to work from the hand-recorded notes and my own memory of the experience to 'recreate' the narrative event. The inspiration for the short story came from reviewing the literature on ethnographical writing in more detail in my writing-up phase and particularly so the writings of Ellis and Rawicki, (2018), Holman-Jones (2016), Richardson (2013), Ellis (2004) and especially the vignettes in Ellis and Berger (2002, p. 855-856). By the time I started writing April's story, I had spent many months working with the transcriptions of the recorded interviews of the other participants and had already written early drafts of the playscript (Chapter 7). I had been using dialogue taken from the transcribed material and had also drawn from and inserted quotations from the hand-written notes I had taken during April's, which had not been taped. Therefore, April's experiences already featured in the draft scripts.

April's story was an emotive one, in which personal loss featured but which also recalled difficult experiences in the role that involved loss of a different kind for April; loss of power and status as a HOD in the new-managerialist regime and the difficulties of managing academic staff in an era of austerity, loss of faith in the organisation and her mostly male senior management team, and eventually loss of the desire to continue in the role. The story format provided me with the vocabulary and the means to describe this sense of loss, which the recalled-dialogue in my hand-written notes alone would not have achieved. As April discussed these experiences in some detail during her interview, the actual details of the events themselves have been heavily edited for anonymity. The dialogue has been recreated from the hand-written notes and so represents a fictionalised engagement with the interactional dialogue as per a literary arts-based narrative inquiry.

The interview with April took place in a very informal setting which I suggest is a testament to the already established relationship between us – we had met before in similarly informal settings for conversations that revolved around our respective workplaces. Despite its

informality, the location was quiet and our space was in a separate space cut off the main area. The location as such was public but private and we remained undisturbed throughout, and April was happy to proceed. The conversational style that emerged was similar to that which would happen ordinarily between us and was a strong driver to represent April's interview as a story.

Story Title – 'How can we trip her up?'

"So how have you been?" I ask, as I opened my notebook to reveal a new, clean page. Thankfully my notes from my interview earlier in the week had been transcribed onto the computer on my way home, and the earlier scribbles torn out. My shorthand would have been hard to make out, but I was still somewhat relieved. I never lose that fear of compromising my participants. It is a constant source of worry for me (Saldana, 1998).

"The kids are well, doing their own thing now, but I lost my father since we last met," April replied. Even though my own father had passed away peacefully three years before, it still felt raw and I hoped my empathy came across...

"I am so sorry April," I said. "It is never an easy time, no matter what age they are or how easy or difficult the passing".

"So what is it you would like me to talk about?" she asked. "Where would you like me to start?"

"I would just like to hear your own story of your experiences as a Head of Department. And you can start anywhere you feel is right for you".

"Hmm... Well I applied for a senior lecturing post when it was publicly advertised. Myself and my family wanted to move and it was one of a number of jobs I applied for that year. I remember I did three interviews. One I didn't get, one I withdrew from and one I got".

There was a brief conspiratorial glance between us and then we both laughed out loud as if to say she had withdrawn from the wrong one!

April continued. "Back then, the economy was very different here then. The Institutes of Technology were expanding (Walsh, 2018) emerging out from under their old Regional

Technical College³³ status. My new role was to focus on the development of a postgraduate course. The department was growing and seeking approval for a taught post-graduate course. I was to launch this as well as develop a new executive-style masters programme. Oh, and doctoral supervision. There was another internal appointment to a second senior lecturing role. Over 20 internal staff had been interviewed for the two posts. I heard afterwards that it was the first time a senior post of this kind went to an external candidate. And they haven't been advertised since so it was a once-off opportunity".

"I think they are being advertised in the sector again now," I interjected. The staff embargos (PSA, 2010) had been slowly lifting since the recession, but promotion opportunities within the IoT sector were notoriously limited.

As if reading my mind, April came back. "There is a serious lack of opportunity in the sector here. It is so flat and rewards are very subtle. There are no incentives. These so-called performance management systems in the public service here... well, the thing is, performance has nothing to do with it, with pay and reward".

I nodded in agreement. There is hardly any staff mobility across grades in our sector, let alone upwards...

She continued.

"So I was in the organisation for over seven years all told. I was overseeing the taught masters at first. It was intended as a full-time programme initially. I co-ordinated and supervised the first intake but the programme got into difficulty when funding support for post graduate fees was withdrawn by the government as part of the austerity measures post-recession. I also supervised research in my department and had a number of Phd students. I never gave up my research students, you know. I needed it for my own intellectual development. It was like sanity in the middle of insanity, I have come to realise now. It was a very busy post, but nothing compared to the Head of Department role later. That was '24/7', just relentless. But with this senior lecturing role, staff development within

³³ In 1998, the then Minister for Education, Mr. Michael Martin, signed an order to change the title of 10 Regional Technical Colleges to Institutes of Technology, in a move that helped change the image of the colleges as third level providers specializing in technical education.

the masters team (of lecturers) was a big part of it, as was recruitment of students. I enjoyed that” ...

“Did you enjoy being a senior lecturer in your organisation?”

“Yes. Yes I did. It was a positive experience. My senior manager was really hands off. He was very important in the development and growing of the team. He was not a micromanager. I respond well to that. I do have ideas of my own. Once the programme was approved, the senior management were very involved, but I sensed there was something in the background... in the development stage... someone not wanting it perhaps. I never knew for sure”.

“It is never easy to get to grips with the politics of organisations – who wants what to go ahead, and why. I find that all the time. Things are never as they seem,” I said...

“When I think back,” April continued “it was a ridiculous timescale. The whole programme was designed from scratch, developed and approved in under a year. There had been talk of it for years. Other players felt they should be the ones who brought it in. There was a sense that I had been parachuted in, above them all. I knew there was resentment in the organisation towards me. I always felt it”.

I was thinking of that word ‘resentment.’ I sensed she was too. It’s something you just have to get used to in the job. it is impossible to please all of the people, all of the time. But why do we care? Men would not even notice, I don’t think. It was something I had talked about at some length with Molly as well.

“But to be fair, I really think that resentment dissipated over time. As a senior lecturer, I established really good working relationships with some people. I was never really a part of that particular department which hosted those postgrad courses. I think I was deliberately put into another department altogether to keep me away from the vipers it was famous for”.

...

“So what took you down the road of a Head of Department?” I asked.

“There had been plenty of other opportunities to go for a headship. I hadn’t applied. But I needed a new challenge when this one came around. I made the decision in relation to my

kids. Their end-of-school exams were coming up. I could continue to tread water for some years and then see or just go for it when this job was advertised. It was an acting³⁴ post for 2 years. What can I lose, I thought? Only my mind apparently!”

We laughed. There it was again, a reference to madness and insanity when it come to a management role. I found myself circling the words ‘management’, and ‘insanity’ a few times on my notepad and inserting the ‘=’ sign between them. I looked back up the page. There it was. ‘24/7’. I circled that too and added it to the equation I had inadvertently created. A mathematical formula for management or insanity, depending on which way you read it, forwards or backwards across the equals sign.

“I wasn’t thinking career moves. It just arose really,” April continued. “A new challenge. And one with time limits. Even better. I wouldn’t have done it if it had been permanent, with no way back. Maybe I was testing myself – could I do that?”

Yes, that sounded familiar. I drifted a bit. ‘Could I do that?’ In my case, I think now that might have been more a case of me thinking ‘I can do that.’ I remember looking around at the management team I had got to know when I was first applying for my own job and thinking at the time - yes indeed, I could do that, if it came my way. I winced a bit at the arrogance of it now. It was arrogant and foolhardy of me, I thought. I came back to April who seemed to be wincing at her own foolhardiness at the time.

“I was trying to prove to myself I could do it. Ego. It is hard to accept now that is why I did it,” she said.

“The new headship was in the very department that I had been kept away from. Others had tried and walked away. But as a senior lecturer, I had developed good relations with some members of the staff in the department”. April paused, as though pondering a ‘*what if*’ scenario. What if she hadn’t gone for it?

Sensing a hesitation, I asked “Did you have any second thoughts at the time?”

“The role was for only one year initially,” she responded, “and not the two as advertised. This was much more palatable for me. At the same time, things had changed on the

³⁴ As noted earlier (Jane), an acting post in the sector indicates that it was not advertised as permanent but one which was for a fixed term, or linked to another permanent post holder who might be on leave for eg.

domestic front and that made me hesitate. I was definitely having second thoughts. But the job offered flexibility and more money. So in the end it was a pragmatic decision”.

The flexibility and the money – I had used the same criteria to justify my own decision to myself to apply for the role.

“Was there induction training? Did you get some help when you started?” I asked.

“I spoke to another female head and I had some really good relationships with some of the more established academic staff members. They were a great help with getting to grips with timetabling and dealing with students. I had very little knowledge of timetabling or the undergraduate programmes within the department in general. There were two or three key members of staff who were really helpful. They were in my office all the time, answering emails, on the phone”. Distributing the leadership - it is great when it works.

April’s manner shifted almost imperceptibly, but I knew what was coming next. We had spoken before of the impact it had on her and her department at the time.

“But then some key people retired. And it was like... all of a sudden... the department felt its fall from glory. In the past, it had been big and strong. It had been the jewel in the crown” of the organisation”.

I let April take a breath. We had spoken before of the series of early retirements of good colleagues from her old department at the time, and it must have been a very big blow to lose those allies at a key time for her, starting off. She must have felt very adrift.

She continued.

“My analysis? The staff became angry from woundedness. They felt lost in the hierarchy of it all. Post-recession, the Government was kicking the Institution (Walsh, 2018; Lynch, Grummell & Devine, 2012; Davies & Bansel, 2007) and the Institution kicked the staff. They were being treated like children. The staff felt they were not being listened to”.

She hurried on.

“I took individual meetings. I met all of the teaching staff in the department. I wanted to get to know them. Nobody didn’t come. I think they appreciated that I made the effort. It was a chance for them to talk to me, to tell me about themselves and what they wanted. But how do you manage appraisals? What do you do with that information? Small

aspirations in a better climate, I could have worked with that... but with the recession? There was no reward, no incentive I could give to those who deserved it. There had been a little flexibility in the past, but there was even less so now in the era of new managerialism (Holland, Hughes and Leitch, 2016). And each staff member had to do two hours extra teaching now. Senior management were turning the screws up. It felt like an administration job, the housekeeping as it were (Harford, 2018; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012). All the big decisions were being made by senior mostly male management. And there was no budget. In the first year I had a little bit to send people to conferences but by the second year that was gone”.

The impact of the neo-liberal agenda in Higher Education in Ireland began to really take its toll from 2012 onwards (HEA, 2013; 2012; 2011). Her flood of words mirrored my own sense of panic at feeling completely out of control at that time in my own job. It started with the dissemination of the Hunt Report (2011) at a general management meeting and built from there. Justifiably disgruntled teaching staff being asked to do more for less, no managerial autonomy as Head of Department, decimated budgets and indescribable pressure from the senior team to increase student numbers. In a sector that relies heavily on government funding (Loxley, 2014; Walsh, 2018), every student counted. And not just getting them in the door but keeping them at all costs. And the pressure had not eased since. If anything, it had got worse.

“In our system (IoT), there was just no carrot and no stick. Nothing,” she continued. “There was no opportunity to develop, to reward good work. And there was no way to come down on those who were not pulling their weight”...

She continued on hurriedly, without seeming to breathe. I sensed we were coming to a climax of sorts.

“During my time, I had to oversee a review of all of our programmes. I had two different sets of staff for this; one was younger, more vocationally-oriented and passionate; the other, older and somewhat wounded. That was hard”.

Now she took a deep breath. I knew where this was going now. I remembered from our conversations at the time that it had been a very hard time for April, her last few months in the job.

“The staff meetings were horrendous. There is a psychodynamic term - ‘retainee’ - you are like a repository for people’s anger. You are a representation of something for them. If they can offload, they can be more productive and creative afterwards. Programme review (IOT sector) is supposed to be democratic and consultative. Subject discipline groups meet to work together. They are basically sending out a message to future students and employers. Consultation with stakeholders is so important in that process and in this climate, they really need to show industry links. I worked hard to show my acknowledgement of their expertise but I emphasised the value of student presentations, work placement and group projects in our programmes going forward. But there was resistance (Ramsden, 1998) to these ideas in the Department. There were a few dominant voices. The model they remembered from their own days when students could get placed with good quality companies meant that they got paid. But now not even well- established universities can offer paid placements”.

“How did you get over this?” I asked. This was important to me. How to find ways around obstacles, rather than trying to break through them, or being stopped in your tracks unable to overcome them. I was always keen to learn from others in the same situation.

“I picked out someone to do the research on the pros and cons of how it is working elsewhere, to evaluate national and international examples of it in action, to see how could it work here in our department. I deliberately picked an ‘influencer’ to speak for it, someone who could act as a persuader. And it worked. It was approved by the time I left. The first cohort should be in work placement by now. There was a big sigh of relief in the Institute. They could have been left behind, their credibility damaged”.

...

“Everything was chipping away at the time. The pressure was coming from different angles. Unlike in universities, everything goes through the Head of Department in this system. This just creates an ‘us and them’. I tried to break that, to spread out the responsibility”

...

April continued.

“Then my female boss retired, and a male senior manager became the nominal Head of our School, who to my mind was very inaccessible. We only had one School management meeting in that time... he wouldn’t answer the phone, emails. It was untenable. I told him that I was leaving. It had been 2 years and a few months. Why on earth had I stayed, why had I extended my one-year contract? “

I knew this must have been hard for April to talk about, even after the passing of time.

“It felt like a vote of no confidence from senior management,” April stated.

I felt the starkness of this. The senior team, they could hang you out, as a few of my participants had said in our interviews.

She continued.

“A staff member had teaching hours bought out for a special project. I had checked and clarified all the way through that these hours would not be needed for this project for the rest of the academic year. I got a message to say that yes, it had been clarified. Then a new programme was coming in and we were half a person down to fill the timetable. The project hours were still needed apparently and I was refused the sanction to buy in the hours that I needed to run the new programme”.

She sighed.

“I have so many regrets. Mainly not making more of a strong fuss about. It’s just not in my nature. I wish I had. The acting senior manager identified a staff member I could use instead. But by not standing up at that point, by trying to reallocate new hours mid-year, I just annoyed the staff and my problems were compounded. And again, no response from the acting senior manager”.

There was no time to pause now, to reflect on a calamitous conflation of events beyond the control of a Head of Department who is seen by staff to be responsible for everything, no matter that in the middle-rung, we have absolutely no control in situations like this.

“There was a decision taken by the senior team to restructure the School and combine a Head of Department role with a senior management post. There was no effort made to

meet with the staff about this. It felt contemptuous. To meet them might have helped to relieve staff anxieties. They were worried that the Department was going to be without a Head, perhaps even closed. They were like neglected children.”

I scanned up the page at my notes. April had used this term before to describe the behavior of a group of staff in her department. Molly had done so too, in her interviews. The notion of ‘mothering’ and minding of staff as a Head of Department had featured highly in Molly’s interview – I hadn’t expected it in this one, but there it was.

“In many respects, the one year was enough. I should not have extended the contract for the second year.” April paused for a moment, her story pulling her back in time to the first year of her contract, to an event that perhaps was a warning for what was to come.

She continued. “The previous winter, the senior team had decided to pull a programme from the listings of offerings to new entrants. Again, there was no consultation with the School management, let alone the teaching staff. After the winter break, there was a staff meeting. It was like a mutiny. I was not sufficiently familiar with the Department in that first year to know what the programme meant to people. A senior manager came to the meeting to ‘quell the mob’. I could sense the staff were feeling crushed, ignored. And I felt undermined, powerless, almost set up. The manner of the decision-making; it seemed so unnecessary, almost disrespectful. Such little integrity from the senior team – when you are needed, they are full of charm and bonhomie but when you are not, they will walk all over you”.

“But you stayed after that, into a second year? Am I right?” I asked, checking over my notes to make sure I had got the dates down correctly. April had skipped forward and back to two distinct yet for her very formative and hurtful experiences in her time as Head. Both had left their mark. I had noticed more and more in the interviews that when experiences are being narrated, they can come out in bits and pieces, precisely because experience happens narratively, disjointed and incoherent. But during the narrative event, the opportunity arises to put shape on that experience, to revisit it, shed new light and gain new insights by ‘re’-presenting it to ourselves in the moment of telling (Kim, 2016; Clandinnin and Connolly, 2000; King and Horrocks, 2010; Reissman, 2008).

“I did extend the contract, yes. But then my boss retired, the combined role was advertised and my extended contract was up in a few weeks anyway. I never thought to apply, not even for one moment. I was asked to extend my contract again to such a time that they would have someone in post. But I said no. I wanted to leave by Easter break. My daughter was doing her final exams. She needed me. Again, it was a pragmatic decision”.

She mused for a split second...

“And a little payback, if truth be told. I felt no obligation to help. I had another job to go to. During my second year I had started looking. Over the course of the following few months, I must have applied for between 6 to 9 jobs. I got 5 interviews; 3 in Ireland and maybe 3 to 4 in the UK and I got the university I wanted”.

It was funny how the pattern of her speech at the end of her story mirrored that in the beginning; a listing of what she had applied for and succeeded in getting. Categorical. Reassuring. Affirming. By leaving when she chose to, she had made a point of not playing by the rules (Nicholson, 1996). She had resisted being the ‘other’ (de Beauvoir, 2009) and turned that gaze back (Wolf, 1929; Butler, 1999).

One last question. I had developed the pattern of leaving this till the last.

“Being a woman Head of Department, do you think it matters?” I asked.

She appeared to give this some thought for a moment and then spoke.

“I had a male colleague once... I think he experienced bullying because he had what some would say was a ‘feminine style of working’. One or two of my colleagues at the time were disrespectful towards him I think because his style was quite consultative. He seemed hesitant, and this could be classed as weak, his style as ‘female’. He showed resilience in the face of being undermined though. I always thought that. But I am ponderous, not weak. I am careful of what I do and say. It works for many people, but not for others.”

She continued.

“They hunt in packs, the way some staff colleagues behave. They develop patterns of behaviour. What issue can we go for now? They are not necessarily going for the person but the issue. It is like a masculine playground. There is not enough to engage them... the terrain is too comfortable. So they spend their time just thinking - how can we trip her up?

They are too full of themselves, not humble enough, I think. Not enough of them have had experience of other work environments, there is little experience of different organisations, other HEIs.”

I had discussed this before with other participants. Academic staff in the IOT sector, particularly in the early days, often came straight in from college, relatively young, with little in the way of other work experiences. They often seemed unwilling to learn from or take instruction from another.

“There was internal politics too. And allegiances. What does that mean, to think politically, to create allies and have them report back to you? I didn’t have that. How to hold that and still like yourself?”

5.2.6 Francis' Story

Francis was my very first interviewee. When I initially conceived of this research study, and I settled on a narrative inquiry approach for the data collection, Francis was always going to be one of my participants, if she was agreeable. We had always had a strong professional relationship as we were in a particular inter-institutional network together for a number of years. As a result, this professional relationship was also underpinned by a genuine friendship and mutual respect for each other. Our level of comfort with each other would help to overcome any nervousness that I might have in relation to undertaking the interviews. While Francis was one of my earliest interviewees, hers was the last storied 'representation' I actually recreated in either poetry or story form. I chose to write-up and present the interviews with Francis as a story because the format allowed me the creative freedom to show the strength of the relationship between us, and relationship and relatedness has been so central to this narrative inquiry (Josellson, 2007; Craig and Huber, 2007). Francis and I were peer Heads of Department in the IoT sector together for a number of years, so like the other participants, we shared a lot of similar experiences, but Francis had other stories to tell too of her time on the senior management team of her own organisation, as a Head of School, stories which I could not share but could learn from.

Francis is retired and there was a strong sense that the interviews gave her the opportunity to look back on events in her career and to re-evaluate them from the safe distance that retirement offered her. She says as much herself. Hustvedt (2016, p. 82) states that "we learn from the past through emotionally important events, perceive the present in the light of that learning and then project the lesson into the future". Even more than that, the interviews (I undertook two) with Francis put me in mind of Woolf's claim (1967) that we look back through our mothers, from whom we can take wisdom and learn how to 'be' in this world. So I have chosen to fictionalise the two interviews with Francis to not only record our particular story-sharing experiences but to provide a backdrop to my reflections on the research that I have undertaken – both my journey as a narrative inquirer and the

journey that I have shared with the participants in co-constructing the 'understory' of our lived experiences as female academic managers.

Story Title – 'I wish I had been stronger'

Francis poured herself some water and sat down at her kitchen table. I checked over the participant information form with her which I had sent on by email and we were ready to start.

"I made some notes just so that I would have some ideas of what to say" she said.

"That's great Francis" I replied. "We can refer to them as we go along if we need to".

"Where do you want me to start?" she asked.

"Wherever you want to," I replied. "I am interested in how you came to be a Head of Department and what that was like for you".

"Ok, let's see. I've had a long career, I suppose. I have over twenty years teaching experience, four years as Head of School and ten years as a Head of Department. I transitioned from teaching to management by taking on a half-time administration role for two years when I was still lecturing. You see I never wanted to be a Head as such".

"That's interesting. I have always thought of myself as having fallen into it, as if it came my way by chance. But of course, I chose to go for it", I interjected. "As a part-time member of teaching staff up to that point, it offered me security and a good salary, and I needed that rearing my daughter on my own".

"Absolutely. But it was not quite like that for me. In the admin role, I had started developing a lot of new courses.... I was just doing two jobs, and I could not continue to do both. And they would have let me continue like that, you know. I ended up creating a totally new Department in my college. It was very pioneering at the time".

This pioneering spirit fitted for me with my knowledge of Francis. She always liked to break new ground, push out the boundaries for herself and her team.

“In all fairness, I had great support from the Director at the time” she continued. “And it brought new life to the college. There was a young, cosmopolitan vibe with it too and it was a first foray into the arts and humanities or us. It was a very brave move. We really paved the way with this new programme and it really opened things up in the sector. A year later, I remember being put under real pressure to change the programme designation... I battled with the Director on it and I just said no. And in the end, he went with me. He was not a traditionalist to be fair and he saw the potential in it”.

“Perhaps he saw the potential in you?” I added, smiling.

“Perhaps” she said, smiling back...

“I was very lucky with my boss at the time” Francis continued. “We had a good working relationship. If it had been either of his successors, being a woman would have been part of the issue. But not for him - he did not see it like that. Even though, back then, the majority of the teaching staff were female and all of the management were male. I was even the first female on the senior team years later. I was the only woman on the management team for over 10 years. Imagine”.

I could well imagine. I thought back to my own start, over a decade ago now, as a Head of Department. There were no women at all on my own senior team back then but women had been making their mark as department heads in the years since across the sector (HEA, 2016; Harford, 2018; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012)

“Was there anything about yourself that made this happen, do you think?” I asked.

“I pushed things, you see. I didn’t see any limitations” she continued. “Looking back now, I was quite entrepreneurial, innovative even. A bit of a creative spirit. I can see that now. I get bored and like to move on, you see, every six or seven years or so”.

Francis continued. “When I got tired of teaching, I worked to get the (new) degree up and running, If I had not pushed myself to take on that administration role, I would not have been given the management job. Then as Head of Department, I introduced computing and IT into business. When I got tired of being a Head of Department, I went for the senior management position. If I had stayed in teaching all these years, I know I would have been bored. I always needed new challenges. You know I never really analysed it like that before”.

I recognised myself so much in this desire for new challenges. I always loved teaching and lecturing but that hankering for something more was always in me.

“It sounds like you really enjoyed those early years teaching and then as a Head of Department” I continued.

“I did. I did. I got a fair bit of support back then, I have to say. But in the last number of years on the executive team, it was a lonely place, the men sitting together all the time in meetings. I felt isolated, on the outside (The Chilly Collective, 2019). I just wanted to go in and do the job you know? And working alongside men... well, in management, there needs to be a willingness to give and take, a sense of you scratch my back and I will scratch yours, if you know what I mean, so that the job gets done. But I found that was not always a characteristic of the men. They were just too competitive”.

I nodded. Francis had been the only woman on the senior team for a year or so into her executive career, but perhaps more importantly, the first woman since her college had been established to sit around that table. It must have been a culture shock for those men just to have her in the room with them.

“... and they were always so big into lauding each other” she continued. Francis launched into a story of a management meeting earlier on in her career, perhaps one that might have prepared her for those feelings of isolation that would come with being at the senior table all those years later. I find it interesting how storytelling is rarely chronological – it seems to be far more episodic and these episodes can spark memories and create time-shifts in our story -telling as threads are connected and woven together to make sense of events

that are temporally disjointed but perhaps emotionally very connected (Colyar and Holley, 2010; Craig and Huber, 2007; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000).

Francis continued “I remember one meeting where the men spent a long time just praising each other. They were sitting around the table, clapping the fellow to the right and then the fellow to the left. This went on for nearly an hour. I was teaching at that time so I had another job to do. I interrupted them, so we could get on with the meeting. I remember it now so well. They looked at me as if to say ‘*Who are you to come in here and break that cycle?*’ Like I was some kind of outsider, breaking in on their traditions and ways of being together”.

She seemed to pause and ponder that thought for a moment before continuing:

“As women we just want to get on with the job, don’t you think?” And women are so much more critical of themselves too in leadership roles” she added, “blaming themselves when things go wrong. I was guilty of that myself too, I see that now. Most men... well some of them are hard on themselves, I suppose. But most women beat themselves up too much... some men could do it a lot more”.

I recognised myself in there too. I can be notoriously self-critical, dwelling on the things that go wrong and rarely acknowledging myself when something goes right.

“As a female Head of School,” she continued, “I really found it so frustrating that the Director was always lauding the Head of School of STEM. Compared to what I managed (in terms of staff and student numbers) the workloads were incomparable! But it was as if the place could not survive without him”. That sounded familiar. My tenure as a department head in the social sciences field has been equally characterised by the neo-liberal glorification of all things STEM.

Francis took a sip of her water and paused for a moment.

“As women we just don’t acknowledge our worth, I think. We don’t waste time. We move on. We don’t look for acknowledgement for our skillset, and as a result, we don’t get it. Looking back on it now I really wished I had been stronger in that regard”.

...

“There is a perception out there,” Francis went on, “being a woman in a job like that... Well, let’s just say that when I retired, when asked what I did, I would have to say I was a member of management at an Institute of Technology. I found myself having to say that. Men wouldn’t even think like that. They would never have to explain themselves”. There was a pause. I let Francis just sit with that for a minute.

After a few moments, I asked “Can I ask you, was it a dramatic difference for you, going from a Head of Department role to being on the executive management team as a Head of School? Did you find you were treated differently by your peers, your staff?”.

“Amongst my peers, I felt there was a lot more respect for me when I was promoted. The Director at the time, he really acknowledged my achievement. But amongst the teaching staff, there was more distance, maybe a bit of jealousy even... especially amongst the females. As if to say, *‘So you are ambitious then? You are not really one of us after all!’* Amongst the men, it might have been more a case of *‘mmm, just how did she get that job?’* And I didn’t feel that as much when I got the Head of Department”.

“That’s interesting” I said. “I know it caused a bit of a stir when I had got my Head of Department role. As an outsider mainly, as I was only a part time lecturer in my college beforehand. But also I think because I was seen as *‘another woman’*. There were three other female Heads of Department out of a total of seven at the time. When I think of it now, my appointment tipped the gender balance for a while. Amongst the men, I think there was a feeling that women were only getting these jobs because the men didn’t want them anymore, but amongst the female lecturing staff, yes, I definitely felt there was a jealousy there I think. I always remember overhearing a female colleague on the corridor outside my office say something like *‘they’d give anyone that job these days’*, perhaps not realising that I could hear her, or perhaps she knew I could. That hurt, I have to say”.

Francis came back now to her memories of those first few weeks when she was promoted to the executive team, recalling the reactions she got.

“The Head of School was a clear step up the ladder you see. With the men, for me, it was definitely more a case of *‘We have a female boss now so Is she going to be bossing me?’*”
The men in the academic staff definitely had a problem with that. In meetings, I knew they were very uncomfortable with me. And I found that difficult because I had had a good relationship with them as a Head of Department”.

This conversation brought me back to a difficult time I had had myself in my early days as a Head of Department with some male teaching staff.

“That is so interesting. It reminds me of how I felt when I moved to a new department as head. There were these three males on the staff team – they had high status amongst the predominantly female teaching staff. They were very technically competent, very skilled and had substantial industry experience behind them. From the very first day, they pretty much ignored me. They would come to meetings, but either say little or dominate completely and I never knew which was worse for me. Looking back, I tried hard not to take it personally, but I find for me that is never easy. I guess I like to be liked. I really struggled with it back then in those early days and was awkward and uncomfortable in their presence”.

...

Francis responded. “That must have been very hard for you. Looking back now, it is so interesting to see how men have responded to me over the years... During my time as Head of Department, there was a big move to try to merge my department with engineering. That was an all-male department back then... Those guys would have had a stroke at the idea of a woman being the boss”. She laughed at the thought of it and continued.

“I once had the opportunity to work with an all-female team you know; it was a golden period for me. We just all wanted to get on with it, to get the job done. Those of us who left (management) since, I really felt that none of us were acknowledged for the work we did. The first Director would have done that, I think, but then I wonder would he have appointed so many women in the first place? I am not so sure”.

She continued.

“Men have to justify why a woman is in the position, don’t they? They think that we are getting it because no one else wants it, justifying themselves for not going for the role. I can see that now, looking back”.

“Yes” I concurred. “It is easier for them to sit on the fence, not go for it at all, and say ‘*well, why would anyone go for that job?*’ or ‘*I would have gotten it if I went for it, but why would I bother?*’ They never really put themselves out there for it”.

Francis continued. “But even in retirement I see that men find it more difficult. How they are defined... and their own perception of themselves, it’s all around their work, their career. Whereas with women in retirement, well it’s different – as if we are ready to move on to the next chapter in our lives. We don’t have to be always looking back, to the way things were, to the way we were”.

She paused.

“I think it is male ego”, she said. “Male ego has a lot to with it. That’s why men don’t apply for the position. They won’t go for it for fear they might fail”.

Almost as if she had reached a conclusion to something that had been puzzling her for a long time, Francis turned to something that affects both men and women in the sector, lecturers *and* managers.

“There is such a lack of acknowledgement for people in the job now, male or female. In the current climate, people are just no longer acknowledged. Years ago, there used to be a great celebration when a new programme was developed. Everyone went out together afterwards. And management acknowledged teaching staff back then. The cut-backs after the downturn really changed everything. And it has never gone back”.

“I could not agree more Francis” I said. “The culture of ‘new managerialism’. Now there is even competition between people who are actually delivering on the same course, to get hours for themselves. And the givers are no longer ‘giving’ anymore because they are just

not getting that acknowledgement from management. It is simply not worth the additional workload. They just stick to their teaching. And you cannot blame them. But it makes the job of managing very hard”.

“Management is a lot of give and take”, Francis added. “But with a culture of performance management and accountability, ‘box-ticking’ or ‘tick-boxing’ as I used to call it (she laughs) and with little or no acknowledgement for anyone, it is almost an impossible job”.

Then, even though Francis had just examined something that affects both male and female equally, she quickly turned back to the differences again, the ‘otherness’, in terms of how men and women are recognised in the sector.

“It’s just so difficult when men are acknowledged and women are not – it really is. It is hard enough now in this climate to get people to work together in teams, but on top of that there is the problem of managing men when you are a woman. They really can behave as if you have no right to be there - ‘*Who is she to manage me?*’ It is back to egos - male egos. They really do cover a multitude. In academic management, male egos are a big part of the problem for women”.

“Especially as Head of Department because we do not have any real power, as such” I add. “We are there really just to facilitate the teaching staff to do their jobs. It is all about them. The power really resides in them, not us. And it is so much more difficult when you are a woman in that regard - if you have men on your staff”.

“Yes, and there is no carrot and no stick, you see, to manage people with. There is nothing to give incentive. In our system... (you need) a personal relationship with staff when you are an academic Head of Department. You can get to really know your staff and that really helps”.

“Yes, I think relationship is really important as a Head of Department” I add. “But there is still nothing to incentivise the staff member who goes the extra mile. Equally there is no way to distinguish between the really good ones and those staff who do the bare minimum

either – they all get paid the same at the end of the day. The timetable can be useful in that regard. In many ways, it is all we have. I think you are right about that”.

“But on the executive team, the senior team, you are much more distant from staff, far more removed” Francis said. “And the higher up you go, the more isolated you can be. That can be particularly hard for a woman. I found it hard and I am confident and well-able. But you have to really push yourself to be included”.

...

“Within a year or so, I think you once told me, there was a second female on your executive team, am I right? Did that change the environment for you?” I asked.

She replied quickly.

“No, not really. Not at all in fact. I think if we had been in the same role maybe, if she had been another academic Head of School. She came into a non-academic role so we did not have much in common on the executive team. She was not someone who had any real empathy or relationship with the teaching staff and the academic work of the organisation. She had set herself apart from that a long time before getting to the senior team so in many ways she might have been more inured to the distance from people, and maybe as a consequence a bit more ‘male’ in her management style, if you know what I mean. I just could never be like that. Looking back, I really see that the Head of Department role was so much more much satisfying and rewarding for me. There were opportunities to be creative, to develop things, to relate to your team. And do you know, I really think there were more decision-making opportunities, to be honest, if you can believe that. Even though I was on the inside if you like, as a Head of School, I really felt like I was on the outside of the really big decisions. Shut out, particularly in the last year or so. But to be fair, there was definitely more ownership (of the role of Head of School) with my first Director though. He would have more respect for you, I think. He didn’t intrude. He just let you get on with the job. I like that. And he respected your decisions. I wonder now would I have stayed on longer if I had had another year like that with him...”

Francis trailed off. We had come to her retirement I thought, where she is at right now and how she came to be here. She spoke more slowly now, thoughtfully.

“My decision to retire had been made the previous Summer really. I had had only ten days when I didn’t have to answer emails, take phone calls, endless, endless administrative work. It was unrelenting. So draining. And a close colleague had passed away that year too. And I still felt it. Oh and maybe I was bored I think too. Yes, it was boredom. That last year, nothing was moving, everything was stalled. There was a particular agenda underpinning executive decisions, and I felt outside of it. And there was just no ability to input or make decisions at all. I began to think to myself – *‘what am I doing here? That’s it I’m gone. But can I afford to go?’* I discussed it with a colleague at the time and bottom line, I realised that I just wasn’t happy anymore. Once I knew that financially it would be ok, I made the decision...

You know, looking back, as a woman, the fact that I was single, that I didn’t have family responsibilities... it was, well, perhaps easier for me to go for management in the first place. Well, to be fair, I may have had other responsibilities which would match it as you know.”

Francis’ elderly mother had only died recently I knew.

“Because the job *is* family-friendly in the broadest sense I think – your time is flexible. You can manage the job if the boundaries are reasonably well established”. She paused for a moment. “And it’s up to women to set those boundaries. What is so difficult though is when women who leave the job are then replaced by men again. It’s off-putting for other women”.

“Is it a confidence thing, do you think – the reason that women might not go for it?” I asked.

“I am not sure where it comes from. Look, as you and I both know it is a very male environment. And not everybody is comfortable in that male environment. That’s definitely part of the problem. I am ambivalent on the topic of women getting leadership roles though I have to say. I mean, I feel that I made my own luck and I definitely am against quotas. My worry is that it would be seen that the woman is only there *because* she is a

woman. She did not get it on her own merit. On the other hand, it is important that women do promote women, if they are the best for the job. And it is quite a good job for a woman, I think. It is very flexible”.

“Yes, I think so too”, I said. “That was part of the reason why I went for Head of Department too. I needed the money and the flexibility, as I was on my own with my daughter. I could drop her to creche or school and not have to be rushing in for 9 o’clock lectures. But you know, when I think back now myself, I was so confident then in myself, in my own abilities I was only teaching part time, relatively new to the system, but I really believed I had something to offer, something to say. I wanted a voice at that table. I really did. I fell into the role only to the extent that the opportunity came out of the blue, and I went for it. The part time hours could not be guaranteed the following year. I had little choice. But I wonder now, I really do, where is all that confidence gone? After ten years in the job, I do not feel like the same person at all... where is she gone, that confident girl I once was?”

“I know” she said. “The job can be so draining, so demanding, that it knocks the stuffing out of you. And you need to get a bit of acknowledgement too, to affirm you. Women just don’t get that in the job, I think”.

We both seemed to pause for a moment then Francis launched into a story of a management colleague she had in the sector.

“The job can just drain you of that confidence. I know it can. A colleague of mine is still a Head of School in an IoT; has been for a good many years now. But she has found it very difficult. She feels like a complete outsider amongst her male colleagues, very brushed aside. Just not treated the same... They are very dismissive of her. She told me that they would say to her *‘Are you upset today?’*, like she was having a bad hair day, if she disagreed with them or had different ideas to theirs. Maybe I am stronger in that regard. I must say, I didn’t experience that. I am very pragmatic. When I started lecturing, it was a very male environment, across the whole college. I remember there was a union meeting once, and someone said to me; *‘You are very lucky to be surrounded by all these men’* and I said *‘What men? You mean my colleagues.’* I was young and teaching only a few years at the time.

But in those early years, I put a marker down. I saw the men as my equals. I saw what was common to us, what we share...”

Francis continued.

“But we are treated differently for all that. If a woman doesn’t deliver in her job, comments are passed. At meetings, women can find the environment very difficult. It can be a very aggressive place. The dominant voices are always male. And if a woman does speak up, she is looked upon as being too strong, aggressive even. Whereas if a man speaks up, the general consensus is *‘Isn’t he great? Good man!’* But I am not in favour of quotas. And I don’t think it is about critical mass either. I think women should be seen to promote women, if they are the best for the job. But on the other hand, women often just don’t go for the job in the first place, probably because of a lack of confidence to go for it”.

“I read recently in a research paper about women in educational management (Lord and Preston, 2009) that the authors saw themselves as ‘surviving’ in the role, not excelling, not achieving but just surviving” I mused.

“To be satisfied” Francis replied “it needs to be about more than that, much more. There is a ‘men’s network’ at the heart of it; all this clapping each other on the back. – a boy’s club. It is hard for women to enter into that world, particularly if there is an underlying lack of confidence. I never had a problem working with men, you see”.

“Nor I” I said.

“We would be very confident women” Francis replied, and we both laughed.

She paused for a moment.

“You know, I have really enjoyed it, the interview. It has brought me right back down the road. The story about the union; the one about the board meeting and the men all clapping each other on the back ... I remember them now as if it were yesterday. But you know, it has also brought back to me how much of my life I lost to the job as well... I spent too many weekends like that when I was working... Far, far too many. That was normal then, bringing

work home with me – in the evenings, at weekends. And I never got any thanks for it. So I am telling you now not to do that, before it is too late. Do not lose yourself to the job”.

“I know Francis. It can suck the life out of you. There are no defined ends to the day – it is not like teaching, where you go in, do your job, and come home. The endless demands of staff, the emails, the constant queries, the reports and the spreadsheets for senior management, they just keep coming. It is like Grand Central Station – everything lands on your desk. And once there, it is your responsibility”.

“Senior management do not take responsibility either, real responsibility. I see that now too” she said. “The real pressure is put on the middle-rung, which let’s be honest is where most women in management are. They are left to deal with staff, to implement the agendas, to bring the staff around. The men want to stay above all that, if they can at all, make the big decisions and not actually engage with staff on them. So that is why it is important not to lose yourself to the job – you will burn out otherwise and you will be let do so and get no thanks for it.”

“Thanks Francis. I appreciate that” I said.

On that note, I realised it must be time to go now. I had lost track of the time. It happens so easily in these interviews. I had no doubt but that my own work was piling up on the desk back in the office however. I started to pack up.

“I never even referred to my notes,” Francis said.

“I know. We never stopped talking” I laughed. “Is there anything in there that you would like to add?” I asked.

“I don’t think so,” she said, glancing over the sheet of paper she had on the table. “We touched on everything really in the end. I had it all in my head, I just needed to prod my memory a bit. You know I really enjoyed it, the interview. It has brought me right *‘back down the road’* . . . I remember those days as if it were yesterday”.

5.2.7 Epilogue

Yes, I thought as I drove away. The interview process was great for that... poking and prodding at those memories, bringing you "*back down the road*" a bit as Francis had said. So much of my own story had come back to me as we chatted.... I might be new to narrative research, and I might have a long road ahead of me as a "perpetual beginner" (Kim, 2016, p. 300) but I was beginning to feel at home in this research community dedicated to bringing together the socially-constructed worlds of speakers and listeners (Ricoeur, in Squire, 2013, p. 58), story-tellers and story 're'-tellers, readers of texts and writers of texts, and I as novice narrative researcher might just have a part to play.

Chapter 6 Picking up the Story Threads - Discussion and Analysis of Participant Stories

6.1 A Postmodern, poststructuralist critical feminist approach

In Chapters 2 and 3, I set out the theoretical and philosophical frameworks respectively for the interpretation of the data in a process of coming to new knowledge about the lived experiences of women in HE management and leadership in Ireland. The teasing out of the story threads embedded in the participant narratives that have been presented in Chapter 5 is informed in this chapter by a critical feminist resistance perspective, a postmodern poststructuralist turn which seeks to examine how the participants live as agentic beings, capable of acting as well as being acted upon, at once both subjects and objects of power relations (Foucault, 1994; 1980; Barker 1998), within the gendered HR organisational structure.

6.2 Power and Subjectivity

“A Foucauldian power analysis helps us to explain the multiple functions of power in the academy... how power is exercised and its effects”.

(Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 49)

The struggle of women against male domination could be seen in Foucauldian terms as a ‘transversal’ struggle (Barker, 1998), one that affects every aspect of women’s lives – it seeps into “their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980, p. 199) – and as such, is worthy of our attention. Foucauldian power is not a tangible entity, not something we can possess or be given – it only exists as an effect as it is exercised on others (Foucault, 1980; 1994; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012; Barker 1998). Power and knowledge are interconnected in such a way that one results in the production

of the other. As such, we are always both subjects and objects of power and we possess the possibility of exercising power at the same time as we experience the effect of it being exercised on us (Barker, 1998, p. 28). Therefore, there are always in existence within our social milieu the possibilities of both resistance and struggle (Barker, 1998, p. 37).

I am interested in unravelling the participant narratives for Foucault's concept of the female subject as a product of power relations, who, as a consequence of the reciprocal nature of these power relations, has both the desire and capabilities to resist, who is an agentic being (Kim, 2016) capable of acting as well as being acted upon, capable of questioning and reconceiving what have been acceptable norms of behaviour in the Head of Department role in the gendered managerial HE culture. Such an approach seeks to question *how* power affects the subject and examines *how* power is exercised in action. As women operating in dominant male professional settings, such an approach implies that "perceived legitimate" knowledge is located "deep" within the dominant power regime (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012, p. 65) and a lack of such "legitimate knowledge" can have the perceived "effect" of disempowerment amongst those who appear to be "outside" of it. However, applying a Foucauldian conceptualisation of power, we can never be outside of power and power relations, but are always deeply embedded in the reciprocal relationship between consent, or acquiescence, and struggle.

6.2.1 Pathways to leadership

The lack of training for senior leadership roles in HE (Davis 2008; Morley 2014) means that pathways to leadership are male dominated. Male-dominated pathways to leadership are institutional exercises of power relations (Foucault, 1994, 1980; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012) that create an advantage for males seeking promotion, because male managers tend to promote those with similar profiles. Senior management can consist of a powerful group of male 'enforcers' who only grant access to senior levels to those who possess the personal capital deemed valuable to them and whose lived experiences or 'habitus' mirrors their

own: they sponsor the mobility of those who have characteristics that closely resemble their own (Newcomb et al., 2013). Bourdieu's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) or set of dispositions that shape action, is acquired through exposure to particular social settings. The habitus becomes unconscious, and takes its form within specific fields, such as a higher educational institution (HEI) for example, which can become a site of cultural reproduction as the actions of the agents within the field continue to shape the habitus. If the dominant agents within HE leadership culture have been, and continue to be heteronormative males, who display hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987), then the 'positions and rules' that are unconscious in the habitus can act to exclude women and perpetuate gender domination (McDonough and Polzer, 2012) by virtue of the resources (or capitals) that are deemed to be valuable. Habitus can act therefore "like a sieve" for who does or does not get promoted (Gander, 2019, p. 116).

This is also referred to as homosocialisation. Homosociality defines the social bonds that exist between persons of the same sex and it is often considered as a social mechanism that operates to maintain hegemonic masculinity when applied to the promotion and recruitment process (Hammeren and Johansson, 2014; Newcomb et al., 2013; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012;). Men through their power and intimacy relationships with other men uphold patriarchy by defending their privileged power positions - they support, promote and mentor people like themselves, thereby creating and maintaining a privileged '*boys club*' (mentioned specifically by Francis).

Women often fail to view themselves as having leadership potential as they have fewer opportunities for career development and growth (Newcomb et al. 2013). There is a sense that in the case of each of the participants, that they did not appear to have had a defined plan to seek out promotion earlier on in their career. An opportunity arose which they took advantage of as it suited their needs (mostly family) at the time, or there was a realisation that they were doing the work anyway in terms of project-leadership roles they had taken on as well as their teaching, which cannot be seen as a formal, institutionalised pathway. Women in academic institutions have also been shown to have less access to career mentoring than their male counterparts (Cross et al. 2019; Dutta et al., 2011). And even

where it exists, it may not necessarily always be as effective as it could be (Cross et al., 2019), often missing an element of relationship ‘mutuality’ or rapport for example that female academics consider important. Early in her managerial career, Deirdre toyed with the idea of getting a mentor for herself, but she wanted to work with a woman, whereas most of her professional colleagues in her discipline were male. She identified a female who had recently been appointed to a Head of Department role, but never followed up because of her belief that the identified potential mentor had taken on an “excessive workload”, symptomatic of the over-work that is now almost taken for granted in the role (Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2019, p. 540). Molly also sought out a career coach herself at a later point in her career when she was in the Head of Department role (*see her poem ‘Alignment’*), an action that in fact led her to leave the post as through the coaching relationship, she came to see that her own ‘goals’ were no longer ‘in alignment’ with those of the role as she perceived it.

Bourdieu’s social capital is connected with the idea of making connections and building relationships in the workplace (or ‘field’) such that there is gainful recognition or contribution to a form of capitals accrual (Gander, 2019). By participating in networking and mentor-mentee relationships, we are acquiring capital which is deemed valuable in the ‘habitus’ of the field, particularly so if these are supported and encouraged by the organisation. In the participants’ stories, there appeared to be no formal networking possibilities in operation and they had to create these opportunities themselves. This is changing more even now with for example Athena Swan (www.hea.ie) initiatives being mandated in all HEI’s, albeit with the incentive of the attainment of accreditation being linked to research funding targets).

Social capital cannot be detached from the notion of cultural capital, which is the embodiment of ‘exposure’ to the habitus over time and is converted into dispositions or actions. It can include for example the recognition that specific training or CPD, formal or informal, will be valued (paid for perhaps) for career advancement. Deidre spoke about her

sense that she needed a Phd to be 'at that level' for example when she was applying. Gander discusses the notion that "under-represented" staff may simply not have sufficient cultural capital to be "let in". Certain staff with "well formed habitus" will be allowed to accumulate capital and advance, while others

"... will become 'stuck', as accumulation of career capital is enough for junior to middle management advancement, but only those who fit within the current system are allowed to progress any further".

(Gander, 2019, p. 116)

This might go some way towards reaching an understanding of women predominating in the middle ranks of management and leadership in HE. Furthermore, this is not unrelated to the accrual of symbolic capital, whereby it is understood that certain values "are considered the norm within the field, an equivalent of status or fit" (Gander, 2019, p. 116) and I will discuss this in more detail in the next sections.

6.2.1 'Otherness'

"I work in a 'man's world' as I work in a 21st century University".

(Henderson, 2018, p. 190)

As discussed in Chapter 2, twentieth century feminism posited that gender identity and femininity are socially constructed (de Beauvoir, 1949; Butler 1993, 1999) rather than biologically determined. Gender inequality and women's oppression are held to be directly derived from this social construction of gender. Femininity is defined through the construction of masculinity which is deemed to be the standard. To be gendered as female is therefore to accept this 'lack', that being a woman is synonymous with being 'lesser'. Woman functions as man's primary 'other' (de Beauvoir, 2009). Spivak's (Landry and Maclean, 1996) notion of subalternity extends de Beauvoir's concept of 'otherness' whereby the female can only ever appear *in reference to* the elite, dominant male grouping.

Becoming gendered is therefore a psycho-social developmental process, a gradual accrual of experiences which are critical to the way individuals behave (Butler, 1993). But this accrual is itself gendered, such that the feminine is in 'deficit' to the masculine.

The expression of feelings of isolation and loneliness in the role are common across the participants' stories. I contend that these feelings of isolation can come from a sense of being in the borderlands, on the margins, as females in the role, on the outside and 'othered'. As a Head of Department, you are no longer a member of the lecturing team and so are on the outside of the largest social group in the organisation - the loyalty of the academic to their discipline rather than the organisation is well established in the literature (Ramsden 1998; Mintzberg 1996; Spendlove 2007). More than that, it can feel like the isolation is enforced as a deliberate act of separation from peers, to ensure that loyalty to management is enculturated. We are locked away in our 'towers', metaphorically at a distance and out of reach. Julie's experience of isolation and 'quietness' is eloquently described in her poem (*'I can't talk to you now'*) and the realisation that there is now a *'them and us'* leaves her confused and disorientated.

Molly is expansive on the topic of the isolation caused by the divisiveness of the *'them and us'* mentality that is endemic in her organisation, perhaps best articulated in her recollection of hearing people say that *'she's not a part of us'*. This is one that resonates very strongly with me as I recall hearing that said about me in the corridors outside my office in that first year in the role.

As a woman in management, the sense of 'otherness' (Bilen-Green, Froelich & Jacobsen, 2008; Biling, 2011) can be heightened as you are more than likely still in the minority in the middle management team and you are even further excluded from the senior (predominantly male) management team. My own story of being given a windowless office that had been used as a store room prior (which I 'tell and retell' in both Jane's and Julie's interviews and which is recorded in Jane's monologues in the poem *'Dressed for the Part'*) epitomises my experience of being 'other' and somewhat 'lesser', as not warranting nor asking for more. As a senior manager, Francis experienced *'distance and jealousy'* from the

females when she first got the post, and she knew the men in her academic School were uncomfortable with her in meetings – ‘*Who is she to manage me?*’, she heard them say. Francis’s experiences of being ‘*shut out*’ of the ‘*men’s club*’ that operated around the senior table when she served on her institute’s executive eventually led to her decision to retire and she leaves us with a sense of the ‘chilly climate’ (O’ Connor, 2014, p. 90; The Chilly Collective, 1995) she experienced at those meetings in her last few years, with the men all sitting together:

“I remember one meeting where the men spent a long time just praising each other..”

(Extract from Francis’s Story)

Women in the middle rung can experience the sense of ‘otherness’ from the male dominated senior management in a number of ways. Both Julie and Molly talk at length of the ‘disconnect’ between middle and senior managers and the sense of abandonment and being left out in the cold that can go with that if issues arise. But perhaps it is April’s experiences of being outside of the decision-making processes of a mostly male senior team which expresses that sense of abandonment and isolation *that being the ‘other’ can invoke*:

“The previous winter, the senior team had decided to pull a programme from the listings of offerings to new entrants. Again, there was no consultation with the School management... It was like a mutiny... I could sense the staff were feeling crushed, ignored. And I felt undermined, powerless, almost set up. The manner of the decision-making; it seemed so unnecessary, almost disrespectful...”

(Extract from April’s Story)

Being the ‘other’ means that women are measured against the ‘standard’ of maleness (de Beauvoir, 2009), which is the ‘general’, conflated with what Butler (1999) refers to as a universalising ‘personhood.’ Butler (1993) contends that performance of gender acts as a cultural construct and perhaps even a *survival strategy*, made up of learned behaviours, values and beliefs. The social situation of woman and the way in which she learns to ‘be’ feminine is not shared by men (Nicholson, 1996; Rowbotham, 1973). Conversely, the social

situation of being 'male' cannot be shared by women. Geertz (1973, p. 11) declared culture to be the psychological structures from which individuals or groups of individuals 'guide' their behaviour – they write the 'rules' or what he calls "ethnographic algorithms" to make it possible to function in that culture. We can study the 'language' and the mores of that culture, but that does not mean that we can ever fully understand it. When we find ourselves in what is a predominantly male space, such as the world of management and leadership, we can work towards understanding how to 'operate' as a cultural 'native', learn the rules and the language of power, but we can never fully 'find our feet' simply because we are not male and have not been reared and socialised as male. We are destined to forever remain outside of it. The converse is equally true for men endeavouring to understand our psycho-social structures, but Rowbotham (1973) contends that the imperative for that understanding is not there because they simply define 'other' by their own criteria, as the male is the 'norm' – men are the 'subjects' (Butler, 1999), the 'unremarkable' (Phelan, 1993), the reference point (de Beauvoir, 2009).

As women seeking promotion to management, we are expected to 'fit' into the male environment that operates in the boardroom, a space and place that was not designed for us and represents a culture that is not naturally ours (Geertz, 1973). Connell's (1987, p. 77) theory of masculinity suggested that hegemonic masculinity is the kind that is 'convincingly' displayed at the senior levels of business for example. Even though Connell (1987) also posited that there are multiple masculinities, one of which may be more "exalted" over others depending on socio-cultural mores that pertain at any time, hegemony is still more likely to be in evidence if it is connected to a culturalised ideal and more importantly, institutional power (O'Connell, 1987, p. 77). Male domination in organisations has resulted therefore in a "symbolically" masculine, competitive leadership culture (Billing, 2011, p. 301) which is used to legitimise and maintain domination of women (Grosswirth Kachtan, 2019).

Bourdieu's symbolic capital can go some way towards explaining the value of 'cultural fit' in the under-representation of women in leadership in HE organisations, Symbolic capital is less tangible and harder to acquire than either social or cultural capital (see section 6.2.1

above). Under-represented groups can manage to acquire aspects of these such as qualifications, the right career-enhancing CPD, the right connections, the best mentor, but it is harder to attain something that paradoxically you need to be part of just to understand what is is that you need to have to be 'let in' - a deep understanding of the legitimate culture or doxa of the organisation, "the undisputed opinions and perceptions" (Gander, 2010, p. 117) that are valued. It acts to reproduce the power relations that exist in a way that 'misrecognises' or fails to recognise the "arbitrariness" on which it is based, and by so doing, determines a habitus that acts to dominate and exclude others in what is referred to as symbolic violence, or subtle and often invisible modes of domination. According to Bourdieu (1990) masculine domination requires a form of complicity, a harmony as it were, between dominants and dominated. While Bourdieu's theory has been critiqued and contested (as itself being a form of masculine domination, Kraus, 2006) - and this is not in the remit of this study to examine further - the position I take on this is the dominated, in this case women, have formed the disposition (of oppression) precisely because of the acts of domination that they have experienced at the hand of the dominants, as their gender is socially constructed through both linguistic and bodily experiences (Butler, 1999).

6.2.2 Men as the Inheritors of 'Legitimate' Power

According to Nicholson (1996) gender relations are in fact power relations through which men and male values have 'super-ordinate' status over women and female values. In a patriarchal society, socialisation into gender roles is an integral part of power over the 'other' and is an enabler for the maintenance of these male superstructures. From the start of life, as a result of socialisation into a patriarchal culture, one of the "effects" this produces is that men behave as if they are 'powerful' or 'inheritors of power', while women behave as if they are non-agentic beings, denied access to a perceived tangible or concrete conceptualisation of power, and as a result destined to be subordinate to the male. The participant stories of 'falling' into the role, being without ambition or expectation of actually getting it, exhibit a socialised gendering of expected role and status within the organisation.

In Deidre's poem *'Mentor'* she speaks about the fact that men are in most of the headship roles in her discipline, and that they come across as 'very self-assured'; they have an innate confidence perhaps as the natural 'inheritors of power'. Similarly she does not see herself as ambitious, in the sense that ambition is seen as someone:

"determined to go for the top job.

Career ambition.

That's what I see ambition is...

Because I'm not that."

In the 1970s, Rowbotham (1973) claimed that despite women gaining freedoms and finding themselves in previously denied positions, oppression continued because as soon as women learnt the metaphoric language of power and became familiar with the words, we found ourselves outside of them. In the last decade or so, women have been making their way into middle management in HE (O' Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; Harford, 2018; Connolly, 2017; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012). Molly in her poem *'It's all very grey'* discusses this and talks at length about how the role for her had become one in which she just seemed to facilitate the academic staff in her organisation to perform their job, rather than her having the legitimate 'power' as a Head of Department. Molly has, to my mind, recognised that for 'power' to be legitimised, it needs to involve this Foucauldian sense of 'circulation' of power and knowledge within the social fabric of the organisation, without which power has become something that is 'owned' and exercised by some 'upon' others rather than in turns 'by' or 'with' others. She is particularly agitated by the lack of support for the middle-ranking management from senior management, so that being in the 'middle-rung', where most women find themselves in HE management is particularly disempowering, sandwiched between two social groupings who between them exercise power 'over' her.

I pick up this conversation with Deirdre in her poem *'So what are we really?'* where together we question our experiences of a lack of support from senior management for us in our

Head of Department roles. For power to be exercised legitimately, it needs to involve that circulation within the social strands of the organisation, continually shifting and circulating between *all* social actors, being exercised by and upon us as both subjects and objects of power, but this appears not to be the case. It is as if once we as women got into a position of power, the rules changed and we are once again outside of them as the role is no longer management per se but facilitation and administration and is as a result almost 'gendered' as female. In Harford's study (2018, p. 13) female university professors pointed to "the gendered order of control which is deemed most explicit in the way in which certain roles and responsibilities, notably teaching, student support and administration, are deemed to be more suited to women than men".

The slowly increasing representation of women in middle management has coincided with the rise of the neo-liberal agenda and the implementation of 'new-managerialism' in HE (see Chapter 2). The emphasis has shifted from departmental leadership to performance monitoring with reporting structures based on metrics or the rise of the audit technology in HE. As such, the role has become much more administrative and feminised as a result (Harford, 2018, p. 7). Francis had been in the system for over 40 years and in her story, she speaks with fond memories of her early years developing and creating new programmes, breaking the mould in the sector with her pioneering new disciplines, but in her latter years, post-recession, she speaks of this new managerial culture which exhibited little acknowledgement or concern for people, and was characterised by disabling fiscal restraints which have resulted in HE management being an '*impossible*' job. Francis recognises the "effects" of this new management culture as resulting in a lack of '*give and take*' amongst academic staff and management staff alike such that the job of Head of Department has become 'impossible' and virtually undoable, relying as it does on a mutual collegiality (Ramsden, 1998) that puts the interests of the organisation above those of the individual:

“There is such a lack of acknowledgement for people now, whether male or female. People are just no longer acknowledged.... Management is a lot of give and take, but with a culture of no acknowledgement, it is almost an impossible job.”.

(Extract from Francis’s story)

The participant narratives express these lived experiences of constantly negotiating the ‘net like’ (Foucault, 1990, 1984) circulations of power in male-dominated HE management structures, mediating and negotiating the role between senior (male-dominated) management and lecturing staff:

the expectation that we would manage everything

and have the... final say

isn’t the case.

There’s a whole level of senior management {above} us

who take those decisions,

or don’t as the case may be...

(Lines from Jane’s poem – ‘No Carrot, No Stick’)

6.2.3 The Language of Power

Language is the mechanism through which the gendered person negotiates their psychological development and social interaction; it is the vehicle through which we negotiate meaning and subjectivity (Beasley 1994; Butler 1993, 1999). Butler (1999) contends that gender performativity is an iterative combination of both linguistic and bodily actions that are viewed through a lens of normative (male) presumptions. Poynton (1989) reported that the typical role of language has been to produce and celebrate masculine subjects and male embodiment over feminine forms, resulting in the subversion of a linguistic practice that is able to express the feminine. Therefore, language that is produced by men can only maintain the alienation and exploitation of women in society. Language that is therefore carefully guarded can act like a gatekeeper to power, and thus to legitimate knowledge (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012).

As a consequence, one of the biggest challenges for women is to master the language of power (Kolbenschlag 1979, p. 103). She cites Lakoff who has described women's use of language, with its questioning intonations and qualifying adverbs, as a "language of deference", one which "presupposes a certain "powerlessness" in the one who asserts, a distancing from responsibility". Women request rather than state. We tend to invite discussion, seek compromise and we are not uncomfortable talking about emotions and feelings. Each of the participants appears to display some or all of these traits of female use of language – sharing discursive space with their management colleagues and academic staff, seeking out compromise where it could conceivably be found, and most of all displaying a level of comfort with the language of feelings and emotion, which aligns with an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1993, see below) and connectedness.

Socio-cultural expectations 'craft' the constructions of the gendered voice (Butler, 1993, 1999; McAllister-Viel, 2007) such that the 'voice' of power has traditionally been male – authoritative, commanding, non-hesitant, closed – and physically a register lower than most women can reach. Hustvedt (2016, p. 62) talks about the pattern of men interrupting and talking over women as being so culturally embedded that it could be considered as a "rote activity" requiring minimal consciousness to the point that the entire person (the woman talking) can even "disappear". Beard (2017, p. 45) posits that we need some old-fashioned consciousness-raising about what we mean by the "voice of authority" and "how we've come to construct it" and dates its origins to ancient Roman philosophy which held that public speech was by definition an attribute of maleness, the converse of which meant that a woman speaking in public was not by definition a woman at all (Beard, 2017, p. 17).

Conversely, Rowbotham (1973) also wrote about the power of silence and the "effect" of the power of silence, and how the oppressed without hope can be quietened. Francis felt in her senior position in her last few years that her '*voice was not being listened to*' and decisions were being made with no consultation, which contributed to her sense of loneliness and isolation in the job. When she retired, when asked what she did, she found herself having to explain she had been a member of the senior management team: "*I found myself having to say that, whereas men wouldn't even think like that*". April talks about her

early years in the role, post-recession and in the era of new managerialism when she felt the middle-managers became essentially voiceless and as a result, powerless:

"... how do you manage staff appraisals? What do you do with information? Small aspirations in a better climate, I could have worked with that ... but with the recession?"

(Extract from April's story)

In the poststructuralist turn, meaning is construed through a system of linguistic differentiation which can never be divorced from power itself. Tannen (1994, p. 36) examined language and how men dominate women by silencing them; how men use silence to exercise power over women. Power in action (Kim, 2016) can be exercised over another by simply remaining silent. April spoke about the difficulties she experienced when her immediate female boss retired, with whom she had had a good working relationship, and was not replaced, and when a senior male manager stepped in to caretake the role, he was, to her mind, very *"inaccessible.... he wouldn't answer the phone, emails... It was untenable"*. She felt pushed away and isolated through his silence and refusal to communicate. Molly is very vehement on the topic of 'minding and mothering' that falls to female managers in the system, and this is discussed in some detail below. Molly in her poem *'Caring for the ones on the ground'* feels that male senior management are removed from direct communication with academic staff, so that they do not have to 'listen' because *'we are listening... because we're women'*. Men can choose to stay silent, which could be considered to be an act of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1990), and therefore distance themselves from 'care' responsibilities inside the organisation.

A lack of confidence in the role can cause us to *remain* silent for fear that what we have to say may not be deemed worthy to be heard. Deirdre's poem (*'If I ever asked him'*) I think describes this sense of being paralysed by a lack of confidence or a sense of unworthiness to be in the role, deferring to a senior male to have the answers to questions she considers that she may not even know to ask.

This discussion on 'silence' as an 'effect' of the exercise of power in action inspired me to write this original poem, based on personal experience of a conversation with a member of a senior management team in my professional career, and inspired by the line in Hustvedt (2016, p. 82).

'Blind to her presence, deaf to her words' ³⁵

I asked him straight out.

With words that

I had rehearsed,

In front of the mirror,

Each morning

For a week.

So that they would be

Paced, measured and rational.

But they tumbled out of my mouth.

Helpless

I watched them fall

In a heap onto the boardroom desk.

And my jumbled up

Alphabet

Made its way across that wooden

Continent between us.

³⁵ Hustvedt, 2016, p. 82.

Even to my ears they seemed whingy, whiney.

Too fast, too high-pitched.

He'll never take me seriously, I thought.

He sat. And stared.

I waited,

In silence.

I left.

6.2.4 Performative Identities and Power

Kimmel (2008) claims that it is impossible to explain gender relations within society, and organisations which are in themselves microcosms of society, without addressing power and power relations. Like gender, power is not the property of the individual but of group life, social life (Kimmel 2008, p. 106; Nicholson, 1996). Foucault theorised that power was deeply embedded in the social fabric of a society (Foucault, 1994; 1980; Barker 1998) and thus societal structures and organisations. Organisations have a logic (Kimmel, 2008, p.101) an internal dynamic that reproduces gender relations between women and men and the gender order of hierarchy and power. The dilemma for professional women is how to negotiate power and give meaning to their sense of femininity and gender identity in a world that has defined them out (Nicholson, 1996).

Sex role stereotyping in organisations can be pervasive and women can adapt themselves and adopt stereotypical behaviours. Like Woolf's (1967) 'looking glass', by reflecting back what men want to see, women behave as if their adaptation were their true nature. For example, Walters (2011, p. 716) surmises that women tend to get lower pay because they don't ask for more. Equally their reticence to put themselves forward for promotion could

also be because of their lower expectations of themselves. However, it might also be based on a perceived view of how they might be treated or what the “effect” would be if they succeeded. This behaviour suggests that they are responding to the social environment in which they would find themselves. Both Deirdre’s lack of confidence to ask questions (*‘If I ever asked him’*, above), or Molly’s recognition that she is bringing her ‘caring’ self into the office are both possible examples of this adaptative behaviour. Apparent lack of ambition or intention to apply for a senior role could also be viewed as manifestations of adaptive behaviour. Interestingly both Deirdre (*‘If I had to do all those things...’*) and Molly (*‘Not a Job for a Mother’*) who have care responsibilities (see Section 6.4 below), discuss applying for a more senior role and why they would not consider it (at the time of interviewing), mostly because of the what their expectations are of the demands of a senior role as not fitting with who they are, and wish to remain, as women.

In my conversation with Jane, I spoke about my own fear of becoming someone I did not want to be - I was afraid of becoming like ‘them’ – the senior male management - adapting my way of being in the role to one with which I did not identify. Looking in a mirror for a view of myself in the role as a Head of Department, I did not always see ‘myself’ reflected back and I did not always like what I saw:

I have a very dedicated staff member...

but I relied on him to do something that he wasn’t allocated to do...

And he absolutely, and correctly, pointed that out and...em...

I had been letting him do work that maybe somebody else...

should have been doing.

And when I get those little...mirror moments

I know I’ve fallen into the trap

of using really good people to the point

that I may be abusing really good people;

And that makes me feel really bad.

(Lines from ‘Good Will Hunting’)

Re-telling this story, I could not hold this behaviour as being really 'mine'. And of course, this gave rise to feelings of guilt about not being 'nice' anymore. Hustvedt (2016) cites Rudman and Glick (2001) on the prescription of female niceness being an implicit belief that women must temper their own agency with niceness:

“In order to be accepted, women must compensate for their ambition and strength by being nice. Men don't have to be nearly as nice as women”.

(Hustvedt, 2016, p. 81)

Like Hustvedt (2016), I don't think that women are “natively” nicer than men – we just learn to be nice through the process of socialisation. 'Niceness' in women is therefore a socially-constructed concept and is rewarded in a patriarchal society. Molly's story (*'Doormat'*) of modifying her behaviour and compensating with 'caring' to avoid being seen as a *'cold-hearted bitch'* is very evocative for me for two reasons; firstly, I see myself in Molly, and would regard myself as having a strong 'care' ethic (Lynch, 2010; Gilligan, 1993) in my professional environment. When we spoke together, we continually asked ourselves –*'Why do we do this? Is it because we want to be liked?'* – perhaps because we have been socialised to be 'nice'. The only other option is to be that *'cold-hearted bitch'* and for me, that might mean not liking myself, let alone expecting others to like me. These behaviours can be seen as adaptive but perhaps also as small but strategic resistances, as we both strive to maintain true to ourselves and our own 'way of working' in the face of pressure to conform to behaviours that are more recognisable in the dominant male mode of HE management and leadership (Arnold and Loughlin, 2019; Gasparini, 2018; Billing, 2011; Koenig et al., 2011). Nicholson (1996, p. 6) speaks of the constant negotiation that is required of the professional woman to give meaning to her femininity and gender identity in the world of power and intellect, when that world has defined her out. Normal women are seen as “emotional, nurturing and passive, with the difficult unfeminine 'harridan' as disturbing the boundaries around the rightful territory of men”.

Being a female in a male-dominated management and organisational culture influences the ways in which integrity and survival are negotiated (Nicholson, 1996). Women's traditional

roles and responsibilities are integral to the experience of being a woman. Gender discrimination, subordination at work, and the experience of being socially and professionally marginalised further influence everyday experience and become integrated into a sense of subjectivity and identity. It is very difficult for the individual man and the individual woman to resist such stereotyping (Walters, 2011). The successful woman can be marginalised because she is unfeminine as a consequence of having to ‘toughen up’ and behave like a man to be taken seriously. Being an ambitious and successful woman is contrary to femininity. To succeed or fail in the world of management or the professions is not something women typically do because it is not part of their sex-role association. They can then find themselves in the paradoxical situation of being at risk of losing their femininity if they succeed or are seen to be even striving to succeed. In the HE sector in Ireland, Devine, Grummell and Lynch (2011) found there is a pronounced emphasis on performative identities in management. Butler (1999) construed gender performativity as the repeated “stylisation of the body” within the regulatory confines of, in this case, the organisational hegemony. Women in positions of power are paradoxically expected to perform their gender but achieve the conventional outcomes of the male-normed role. Devine, Grummell and Lynch (2011) found that women who enter management often have to act to ‘practise’ gender in a managed way to retain their status both as women and managers – minimising gender differences to be seen as equal to men but retaining their femininity (identity) to avoid being ridiculed for appearing as overly masculine. April reflects on the internal politics amongst senior management in her organisation, and the crisis of identity that can create for a woman particularly:

“What does that mean, to think politically, to create allies and have them report back? I didn’t have that. How to hold that and still like yourself”.

(Extract from April’s story)

Both Gilligan (1993) and Noddings (1986) theorised a way of being in the world which values relationship, intimacy and care as an alternative for both men and women, whereas the masculinist ethic proffers distance and disconnection and “typically involves valuing

autonomy, rights, disconnection from others, and independence, while seeing other persons and intimate relationships as dangerous to pursuing those values” (Norlock, 2019, p. 9). Jane worries that her tendency to act to ‘fix’ things might be perceived as a ‘criticism’ of how her (female) predecessor worked, and that she might not therefore be seen as the most ‘diplomatic’, fearing her style might be perceived as less feminine and more masculine in that regard. Conversely, April talks about a male colleague whom she felt was disrespected because he had what could be considered a ‘feminine’ style:

“I had a male colleague once... I think he experienced bullying because he had what some would say was a ‘feminine style of working’... He seemed hesitant, and this could be classed as weak, his style as ‘female’”.

(Extract from April’s story)

In this zero-sum game, there is no possibility for a person to combine the strengths of a man and a woman. Masculine and feminine are seen as mutually exclusive constructs. This polarity acts against women who pursue positions which are perceived as being powerful, and also men whose behaviour is not deemed to be sufficiently ‘male.’ A man seeking a position of power must enhance his masculinity while a woman must reduce her femininity. Walters (2011) notes that what such women gain in authority they are perceived to lose in femininity. Women who want to break through the wall of masculinity do not need to be substantially attacked on their abilities or suitability for the role - they can simply be mocked as being less feminine. The popular media is full of mocking references to strong, female political and corporate leaders whose status is associated with their lack of femininity and their ‘aping’ of masculine behaviours. Females are conditioned and expected to act communally and with interpersonal sensitivity – the feminine ethic of care and connectedness (Noddings, 1986; Gilligan, 1993) - and not in the pursuit of individual power. As such, women who aspire to leadership roles are caught in a bind whereby they risk being evaluated negatively if they are too feminine in their leadership style as well as if they are too masculine (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011; Walters 2011; Nicholson 1996;).

Since the 1990s the imposition of neo-liberal agendas (see Chapter 2) on university systems in the UK, Australia and Ireland (Harford, 2018; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009; Keamy 2008; Ozkanh and White 2008) have forced a competitiveness on the system that has only added to this masculine image and created a culture of leadership in which women's capital is "de-valued, misrecognised, and disqualified in current reward, recruitment and promotion practices" (Morley, 2014). Neo-liberalism in HE has created a working culture such that senior postholders are "subjected to disciplinary rationalities that largely preclude being the primary carer" (Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009, p.191). Their reluctance to "lean in" (Sandberg, 2013) could be attributed to the "effects" of organisational power impacted by a culture of neo-liberalism and the austerity culture it engenders, wherein the pressure on managers for measurable performance along with '24/7' availability can only result in unliveable lives (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011; Morley, 2014) particularly when the majority of caring in the home is done by women (see below, Section 8.5). The lack of women professors in the university sector in HE (See Chapter 3) could be attributed to a career model that forces women to choose between work and family, where they can risk being "stretched personally and professionally" (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011, p. 645) in their efforts to be viewed as equals. There is an overwhelming sense throughout the participant stories of not being able to get the work done within the confines of the working week and the impossible demands of the job on them as women who may have 'care' responsibilities at home and who also 'care' in work, who work long days and take on extra tasks just to be seen to be equal to their male peers and who recognise that senior (male) management may just not be compatible with their lives as women.

Both April and Francis speak at length on the impact of the economic recession and the new ways of working in the HE sector that it ushered in. This regime of 'new managerialism', requires the crafting of an 'elastic self', in a "relentless pursuit of working goals without boundaries in time, space, energy or emotion" (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011, p. 632). However, this elasticity is gendered, as it derives directly from the moral imperative of women to be primary carers (see below, Section 8.5), an imperative that is not applied to

men. Women in management roles are under constant pressure to compete equally with men, even though the playing fields are not level, and we must be seen to be as willing as our male colleagues to sacrifice all to the realisation of organisational goals, which as de Beauvoir (2009) noted, can leave us torn between the two worlds of the professional and the personal, for which we can pay a huge price.

6.3 'The ties that bind' - Care, Caring and Connectedness

The social construction of the female (de Beauvoir, 2009; Butler, 1993) means that her position is “deeply ambiguous” (Norlock, 2019, p. 7), defined as she is in relation to the ‘Other’, which is “indispensable” to the understanding of the economic and social constraints which serve to limit her opportunities for status, subjecthood and choice.

One of the key determinants of women’s status has been the division of labour and childcare – the freer and more removed women are from childcare, the higher their status (Ozkanh and White 2008; Kimmel 2008, p.61). The fact remains that women take primary responsibility for care and the home, irrespective if they also work full-time outside of the home or not. As a consequence, men and women do not develop their working lives in similar situations; as Walters (2011) puts it, if women could rely on their partners to create a haven away from work, then things might be different. Alexander (1994) claims that there is ‘ambivalence’ in the feminist movement towards the home. However, the alleviation of the double workload and the consequent release of women from their roles as primary carers would result in a more equitable division of labour in the home, rendering them more visible to men, and would represent a giant leap forward towards a more sustainable gender equity.

Walters (2011) claims that feminism in the 1990s had become almost culturally embedded, part of the ‘air we breathe’ - the time for the ‘personal as political’ had passed and the movement could concentrate on gaining political, social & economic equality. All that was required was that the conditions for equality be put in place and the “remnants of the old-fashioned sexism would wither away” (Walters, cited in Cochrane, 2010). However, in the

intervening decades, just as women have made few inroads into the 'corridors' of power, men have not moved into the home or domestic sphere in any substantive way. Deciding not to work full time can carry with it a heavy penalty for a woman, both financially in terms of take-home pay, as well as loss of status in the workplace and poorer promotion prospects. Choosing to work full-time can also carry penalties, namely the stresses and strains of trying to manage primary care responsibilities with work commitments, resulting in the creation of an 'elastic self' (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011, p. 632), a superwoman (Newcomb et al. 2013, p. 674) who can have it all, so long as she can juggle it all. Women's careers can then tend to follow 'winding tracks' (Wallace et al. 2014) which ebb and flow over time, between full-time and part-time, depending on their care responsibilities, unlike their male counterparts, whose career paths are linear tending to be for the most part unfettered by the burdens of care. Feminism is very much an unfinished revolution as a consequence. Inequality of the sexes is still a reality; men have much more political and economic power, and women still do much more unpaid and unrecognised work at home, even if they work full time. And when men and women become parents, the gap between their experiences widens (Walters, 2011).

For myself, April, Julie, Deirdre and Molly, care responsibilities featured heavily in both the decisions taken to go for the role and those taken, or not, to stay in it. Francis states that the job is one that can offer flexibility to women with care responsibilities, as lecturing can be restrictive to teaching timetables and both April and Julie welcomed the flexibility and the financial benefits of the role, as did I – it represented financial stability that I had not had since the end of my marriage. Both Deirdre and Molly discuss the support that they had at home as their partners unusually took on the 'caring' role to allow them the freedom to immerse themselves in their careers. I note that I did not have such support. In my poetic biography (Chapter 1, Section 1.10) I declared that I did not wish to be defined by my status as divorced and a lone parent. However, I do recognise now that perhaps I have held on to this self-perception underneath the surface as a result of the interviews. Throughout my career as an academic Head I have worked to downplay this additional burden that I carry (even using the word 'burden' causes me to feel a sense of guilt about how I might be

seen to perceive the responsibility for parenting my own child). Lynch et al. (2020, p. 165) state that for those parenting alone, most of whom were women, the additional workload was “quite overwhelming” and “those parenting alone... were the most pressurised”. Perhaps it is sufficient for me to say that I dealt with the overwhelming nature of the additional workload by adopting coping strategies that worked for us both, myself and my daughter, and that I should perhaps be more open to accepting recognition that it was indeed difficult and overwhelming, but I managed, or rather ‘we’ managed it together.

6.3.1 Embodiment, Empathy and Nurturing

In a patriarchal society, women are strongly socialised to be caring and nurturing (Nicholson, 1996; Noddings, 1986). This connection with nurturing and the domestic sphere is deeply rooted in Western culture and the embodiment of women. The ancient philosopher Plato held that women in their embodiment possessed all the traits he wished no one to have. To transcend their bodies, women would have to have their domestic chores taken from them so they could gain the discipline needed to focus on the superior ‘refinement of their souls and minds’. Minds and bodies were ranked hierarchically and in this dualist philosophy, women were associated with the body rather than the mind (Bowden and Mummery, 2014). This association led to the classic male and female stereotypes in the home and the workplace based on a belief in women’s lack of aptitude for high intensity careers and men’s lack of aptitude for empathy.

De Beauvoir’s (2009) embodied female is limited by the social construction of her gender (Butler, 1999), who could achieve transcendence and immanence in her own subjectivity if she was not defined by, and in reference to, the male as the ‘Other’. Poststructuralism has since re-envisioned embodiment, a movement emerging from Freud’s work on the understanding of self as being entwined with the body. This has led to an understanding of the ‘I’ that stresses rather than devalues the body (Butler, 1993; 1999). Freud’s work provided the basis for later feminist thinkers such as Gilligan (1993) to describe the

differences in the sexes in positive terms based on their different psycho-sexual development - girls resolve the Oedipal complex differently and experience the feelings of 'others' as their own. The ability to empathise has been built into the primary definition of self so women have a greater orientation than men towards relationships. This constructed capacity for empathy "is productive, much more so than the abstracted aggressively autonomous mode of being that men have been socialised into" (Bowden and Mummery, 2014, p. 56), the masculinist ethic of autonomy, rights, and distance (Norlock, 2019).

In a similar vein, Noddings (1986) theorised that women's capacity for 'care' compels them to act on behalf of the 'other' but critically, she distinguished between acting as the 'one-caring' which requires a 'feeling with' the other, and empathising, which she holds is a more masculine and abstract construction, with an emphasis on problem-solving and resolution. The female construction of self leads to the valuing of everyday life (Gilligan, 1993) relationships, communication, and connectedness, both with people and the natural world. These values are to me very evidently held by all of the participants, including myself. In our co-constructed narratives, there is a constant re-iteration of the importance of communicating, engaging, supporting and reaching out to make connections with people as a way of managing them

Molly below articulates how this approach garnered her some respect even in difficult circumstances:

when I said I was resigning
I heard from everybody...
I haven't heard any negative feedback,
even though I didn't agree with people...
I think that's very good...

I got a nice email from someone who I had difficulties with him...
he said that he used the word "honourable",
he said that I was an "honourable head of department."
(Lines from Molly's Poem 'An Honourable Head')

Noddings (1986) views the action of caring as the 'one-caring' to involve a 'feeling with' the other – not just a case of walking in their shoes, as it were, but a process of taking on the other's reality, characterised by an 'engrossment' with the other and a move away from self. As such, it is more complex than merely empathising with a view to problem resolution. It is characterised by feelings and emotional responses, and an investment of self on the part of the 'one-caring', as exhibited by Deirdre and Jane in their monologues I think.

Jane, having worked in a male-dominated industry all her life, in this poem expresses her belief that women to make better managers, because, to use her own phrase, they have 'empathy', but she qualifies her understanding of empathy as the ability to take yourself "out of the centre" (Noddings, 1986) to look at a problem, while remaining aware:

I think we can empathise.

We can understand a lot more... we actually do.

We know what issues may be behind something, I think.

You know empathy to me is an incredibly important quality.

It's the ability to look at a problem from a '360 degree' view

And I don't know...

but I find more women are better able to do that.

They're able to take themselves out of the centre of the problem

And really look at it.

(Lines from Jane's poem '360 degrees')

The participant narratives to my mind overwhelmingly display the centrality and the efficacy of Gilligan's (2011) ethic of care to their own transcendence and way of 'being' in the role as women. They highlight the value of the 'personal' and the drive to stay connected by

building relationships with their staff teams, which is then systematically denied them in their stories of feeling 'disconnected' from, and left adrift by, their senior predominantly male teams.

6.3.2 Femininity as our **only** strength or as **our** only strength?

However, when femininity is seen as our only strength (Walters, 2011) this can act against women in the workplace on another level, particularly for women in management and professional roles. Women are then seen as valuable in a patriarchal system because they can manage much of the 'messy' emotional work of bureaucracy in what amounts to an exploitation of the feminine ethic of care. Perceived as a consequence to be good communicators and mediators (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Morley 2014), they are called upon to negotiate and mediate the organisational message and subdue the negative responses that organisational change (Ramsden, 1998) can bring about for example, and this has been particularly so in the very ruptured and fractured world of restructuring and new-managerialism that is taking place in HE currently for example (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012). Women in managerial and leadership roles can therefore be expected to take on the bulk of the 'domestic chores' or 'housework' of the organisation (Harford, 2018, p. 7). Molly is particularly vociferous on the expectations of senior male management for female middle-managers to do the caring or 'mothering' as she calls it, and it is a theme that she carried through both of her interviews.

Paradoxically, this 'care ethic' (Noddings, 1986; Gilligan, 1993) can be perceived as hampering women's ability to drive forward the kinds of 'measurable' change that organisational management in a neo-liberal era demands, and on which management performance is measured. Women are still expected to conform to the masculinist leadership style which is seen as task-focused, result-driven and dispassionate at best, aggressive and domineering at worst. The 'care' ethic also means that women tend to prefer a transformational leadership style that is enabling, accessible, concerned and

people-oriented and which encourages questioning, initiative, and a sharing of vision and leadership (Ozkanh and White, 2008). Role conflict and the contradictory expectations of leadership style become increasingly more relevant as a woman's career progresses; the higher up she goes, the more at odds the demands of leadership are with the female 'care' ethic, an ethic which is encouraged and used when it is needed to do the organisational 'housework' but otherwise dismissed of no value. Deirdre discusses the balance needed between care and empowerment, and how, if judged incorrectly, the lack of this balance can be damaging to both herself and her staff – she may push the staff member beyond their capabilities and at the same time, create a conflict for herself in terms of how she sees herself.

These contradictory (Nicholson, 1996) demands on professional women can contribute to a constant sense of ethical (Noddings, 1986) and leadership conflict (Grummell, Devine and Lynch, 2009), as well as a sense of being pushed to the limits personally and professionally to perform on an equal footing with men (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011). In our attempts to tick all the boxes that the 'hyper-masculinist' of HE leadership (Harford, 2018) demands of us we can actually end up perpetuating the hegemony, and self-limit our chances of success. To compete with men, it can appear that we need to outperform them. We are once again, 'lesser', a 'deficit' (de Beauvoir, 1949) and we have to make up ground just to start on an even footing.

When femininity is seen as only our strength (Walters, 2011), or when our capacity for caring as the 'one-caring' is misconstrued as having nothing to say to men about alternative modes of ethical thinking and behaviour (Noddings, 1986; Gilligan, 1993), this can further act to keep women tied to the 'messy, emotional' housework of the organisation as well as the home itself, because men are then seen as simply not possessing the requisite skillset and as such, are ill-suited to these tasks. They are then denied the opportunity to operate in this sphere and it is simply left to women to do so thus serving to keep the status quo in a patriarchal society, feeding a resurgence of biological determinism; if women earn less, if women do more domestic work, if women are better at minding children, if women are better with 'people', if men have more power, if men have more status, if men earn more,

if men apply for and get promotion more often, then this simply can be conceived as the way things are supposed to be (Walters, 2011). The normative order according to Lynch, Grummell and Devine (2012) then regulates itself through biologically-determined gendered 'doxas of care'. However, Walters (2011) contends that there are aspects of our femininity such as home-making and empathy (or caring as the 'one-caring') that could and should belong to men also.

As such we need to let go of our 'femininity' as much as men need to be allowed to develop it, without fear of ridicule. Otherwise, true equality of the sexes remains illusory.

6.4 Agency and Resistance

A Foucauldian approach to analysis of power relations assumes that resistance or 'strategies of struggle' are always a possibility (Foucault, 1994; 1980; Barker 1998). Stories of resistances – some small, some not so – are threaded through the participant narratives. When her female line manager was replaced with a male, Julie worked hard to try to conform to his more bureaucratic way of working but decided to walk away from the job rather than try to make herself 'fit'; she realised that it would result in losing something of herself by doing so. Julie's action, leaving rather than trying to fit in, could be interpreted as an act of 'resistance', by claiming back her own subjectivity and valuing her own 'feminine' way of working.

Foucault's (Foucault, 1980, 1994; Barker 1998) theories of power relationship imply such "strategies of struggle" so that alternative ways of being are always possible. There is always a choice between acquiescence and resistance. Agentic beings, who are both subjects and objects of power, can make that choice. Benjamin (2013) sees gender domination as a complementarity of subject and object, each the mirror image of the other – a gender polarity. The denial of subjectivity to women (de Beauvoir, 2009; Butler, 1999) therefore means that privilege and power falls to men. To halt that domination, women

must claim back their subjectivity. Maya Angelou (1993) implores women to resist being 'lesser' and at the same time, to be in all ways true to her womanhood:

"What you are supposed to do when you don't like something is to change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it".

(Angelou 1993, p.87)

She holds that the woman who survives intact avoids becoming a mirror image (Angelou, 1993, p. 7) of those men who value power above life – she must resist and prize her tenderness. To resist becoming lesser, Nicholson (1996) states that in a game where you cannot win, the only sensible thing to do is to refuse to play the game by the rules that men have made. Julie's 'resistance' was mirrored by similar actions taken by Francis, April and Molly. Francis retired earlier than she needed to as she had had enough of being shut out of the '*boys club*' she found herself in yet was expected to work the way they work with no thought for her home life. The treatment April had received from her senior team during a time of crisis in her department meant that she '*felt no obligation*' to stay until they found a replacement when an opportunity for another job arose. She called it '*a little payback*'. Molly decided she did not want to be a Head of Department anymore, as she could not justify 'the mothering' any longer, but she prided herself on waiting it out till the very day her contract ended. She wrested back control by finding support for herself in the form of a personal coach and reached a level of self-awareness sufficient to realise that she was no longer in 'alignment' with the job.

More subtle resistance happens on a daily basis when as female managers we are seen to 'prize' our own way of working and this was very evident in the participant narratives, which convey strongly interpersonal and consultative approaches, where the person and the 'personal' are valued, underpinned by an ethic of care (Gilligan 1993; 2011), itself a form of resistance to the hegemonic masculinist ethic. For Julie, trust is important and she likes to praise her staff and give acknowledgment and recognition for their work, which doesn't ordinarily happen in her organisation. Deirdre values relationships and her staff tell her they like working with her – '*it's nice to be here.*' Both Jane and Julie enjoy meeting and

talking with students and see it as the highlight of their role. When April and Molly experienced resentment when they stepped into the role, they both drew on their interpersonal skills to combat this. For April, the resentment dissipated over time for her by the establishment of *'really good working relationships'* with her team while Molly confronted the doubt she experienced from staff by *'burying herself'* in the workings of the department.

To resist, women need to avoid becoming a 'mirror image' of those men who value power above life (Angelou, 1993) and perform their own feminine identities. I particularly resonate with Woolf's (1967) metaphor of the 'mirror image' when she implored women to stop reflecting back to men how they want to see themselves. She intones that women have acted for centuries as 'looking glasses' to men's vanity, possessing "the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man twice his natural size" (Woolf, 1967, p.53). The process of halting gender domination would be served if "one begins to tell the truth" (and) as the figure (of man) in the looking glass shrinks, his fitness for life diminishes". Woolf held that women are victims of themselves as much as of men and are upholders of patriarchy and male domination by acting as mirrors to men. In order to create an alternative, Rowbotham (1973) advocates for women to shatter the self-reflecting world (mirror) which encircles us in order to project our own image into history; for we are only seeing ourselves and others through the lens that men have made for us. By stepping down from the position as Head of Department when her female boss retired, it was as if Julie stopped reflecting back to her new male boss how he wanted her to be, which she felt was bureaucratic like him, and projected her own image out into the world, which was how she wanted to be. But by doing so, by stepping down and not continuing to be in their 'club', on their side and in their image, Julie sensed that it was like a 'betrayal' for the senior management:

So for example when I went back as a lecturer I got-

"Ah, you've shown your true cards."

...I've turned sides

because I became management;

{and} because I didn't continue as head of department.

Was it almost like a betrayal? Did they feel betrayed?

Yes I think they did probably...

yeah, you know...

Then, "what can we do to make you stay?"

and I said

"I've had enough of that."

(Lines from Julie's poem '*Betrayal*')

In one of Deirdre's interviews, I shared with her a story from my early years as Head of Department when I had to deal with an industrial relations issue (note that this is not in the poetic monologue, but in the original transcript). It represents my own 'resistance' to the pressure to conform to the organisational and male dominated management culture of what I considered to be a cultural legacy of poor engagement with staff where an issue or grievance arises. To take back control, I opted out of the formal procedures wherein I felt I was being manipulated to perform in a certain way – distanced, autocratic and procedural - and decided to just meet with the aggrieved staff member on my own in an informal capacity, to see "differently" (Noddings, 1986) and to hear "a different voice" (Gilligan, 1993) to the one that I was supposed to hear. Molly speaks about the hostile and distrusting attitude of some academic staff towards senior management in her organisation which is historical and which has created a culture that is '*impossible*' to break down. This sense of distrust of management has been heightened in the neo-liberalist university . Academia in general is antithetical to being managed (Ramsden, 1998) but when the situation is contentious and fractured, whatever chance there is of resolving the problem, it is rarely going to be via the often poor interpersonal practices of executive male management styles.

In a seminal paper on the male 'gaze' and women's 'looked-at-ness' in film, Mulvey (1975) explores 'looking' as an opposition of active/male, passive/ female where the male is active, moving the story forward, making things happen, while the woman is passive, her visual

beauty and female allure (Walters, 2011) employed to 'arrest' the action, allowing the audience, and her male lead, the pleasure of looking at her on display, what Mulvey refers to as scopophilia. The action of male domination can, I posit, be 'arrested' with resistance and Foucauldian 'strategies of struggle'. Butler (1999, p. xxviii) writes on the (gender) trouble of the female object who returns the (male) glance and reverses the gaze (Mulvey, 1975), thereby "contesting the place and authority of the masculine". Without such resistances, Woolf (1967) considered the concept of 'woman' to emerge as a "queer composite" who dominates the lives of kings and queens in fairy-tales but in reality is the slave of any boy who puts a ring on her finger.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have unpicked the story threads in the participant narratives and viewed them through a lens of critical feminist inquiry. I have unravelled the participants' stories of being 'other' (de Beauvoir, 2009; Butler, 1999) in the male-dominated world of management and leadership that has defined them out (Nicholson, 1996, p.6) and where the habitus (Bordieu, 1977) acts as a sieve to keep them out (Gander, 2019). I have disentangled their experiences of negotiating power and powerlessness (Foucault, 1994: 1980) and "the fact that men have traditionally been the ones to define what is and is not knowledge" (Nicholson, 1996, p. 67). Finally, I have unpicked their lived experiences of the ethic of care and connectedness (Noddings, 1986; Gilligan, 1993) that creates the constant tension between their domestic and professional responsibilities (de Beauvoir, 2009) and the endless need to negotiate the expectations to perform their gender as women in the masculine world of management and leadership (Arnold and Loughlin, 2019; Gasparini, 2018; Nicholson, 1996) with the paradoxical expectation to manage and lead as defined by male norms and masculinist ethics.

In the next chapter, I weave and knit these story threads together and craft a short, ethnographic playscript to tell a composite story that seeks to bring together these lived

experiences into one, coherent 're'-telling and shed new light on the '*understory*' of women in management and leadership roles in HE in Ireland.

Chapter 7 Telling a New Story – Reflections on an Arts-Based Methodology

“It is always about finding new ways. Standing still is dangerous. You have to look for new ways to see the world and new ways of telling the world what you think of it.”

(Graham and Hoggett, 2014, p.1)

7.1 Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I unravelled and teased out the threads of the participant stories through a lens of post structural feminist inquiry. In this chapter, I weave those threads together and work towards the creation of an ethnographic playscript as I ‘think theatrically’ (Saldana, 2003; 2005; 2010; 2011; 2014; 2018) with the objective of dramatising the data primarily for the purposes of wider dissemination. I will also reflect on the methodology employed, that of an arts-based narrative inquiry, to “tune into the everydayness” (Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2018, p. 538) of the lived experiences of women in HE management and leadership in Ireland. In this research undertaking, I was guided by the notion that artistically rendered forms of social science research can offer “to a discerning audience, a level of insight and understanding into human social life” (Saldana and Wolcott, cited in Barone, 2002, p. 258) in a way that words alone may not (Barone and Eisner, 2012).

As a novice playwright, to creatively engage with the participant stories to produce the script, I needed to come to know and see myself as both storyteller and story ‘re’-teller. It is my belief that I could not have done so without the stock of knowledge (Johnson, 2002) and experience that I have accrued, that insider perspective, on the daily lived realities of being a woman in the role, a woman whose own experience could resonate with, and rebound off, the lived realities of my fellow participants, and as researcher, interpret them while remaining open to hearing and learning of new and divergent experiences to mine. This does not mean, however, that these are now ‘my’ stories – as Brinkmann (2018) cautions, as ethical qualitative researchers, we must not exert a monopoly on the

ownership of the products of research. The stories were as a result of a collaboration, a joint effort, and they will remain, both in text and performance, our stories, neither mine nor theirs. As a researcher, to possess them as mine would be to return this research undertaking back into the midst of what Spry (2001) refers to as modernist, colonizing methodologies.

To write, and ultimately perform, on stage these co-constructed stories without knowing how to tell my own story would render the act of performance at best entertaining and at worst, a questionably worthy attempt to dramatise the data. An integral part of Saldana's message as I read it is that we cannot learn how to tell someone else's story until we have learnt to tell our own - in the "process of observing, communicating with, and writing about others", we study and learn about ourselves reflexively (Davis and Ellis 2008, p. 853). By sharing my stories with the participants, and thereby co-creating new stories and new knowledge with them, I have come to know and see myself.

Saldana (2005, p. 14) tells us that good ethnodrama *should* entertain – entertain ideas as well as the spectators. It should say something, leave both myself as the performer and the audience with something new to think about, which is what I set out to do but which I can really only fully now articulate, having gone through this research process.

7.2 Arts-Based Narrative Research – A Reflective and Reflexive Methodology

7.2.1 'Deeply' human relationships

In narrative inquiry, data is collected from the establishment of 'deeply' human relationships with the participants and is therefore fundamentally relational. This presents what Josellson (2007, p. 538) refers to as an ethical conundrum for narrative inquirers who bear a responsibility both to the participants with whom we are in intimate relationship, and to the academy to whom we owe a professional obligation. Fulfilling both of these obligations requires, according to Josellson, an implicit as well as an explicit contract from

the outset. The latter is the widely recognisable one used across many disciplines that describes the role relationship between the researcher and the researched, including a transparent statement of purpose and intent and statement of confidentiality, and this I completed via the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix 5).

The implicit contract, Josellson contends, is harder to define and even harder to articulate when when starting out retrospectively, I think it could be said to be central to the principle of 'doing no harm' as it underpins the development of the intimate, personal relationship between the researcher and the researched. Because of the interpretive nature of the narrative inquiry process, the inherent ethics of narrative research rests on the innate honesty of the researcher's reflexivity (Josellson, 2007, p. 546).

I therefore sought to build-in an 'honesty' into my reflections on my positionality and on my own personal lived experiences and cultural imprints so that I could account for how these might have impacted the research. I outlined in my personal biography my social and cultural background, my dichotomous rural/ urban working-class upbringing, and the challenge to educate a family in those economic circumstances. That has left me with a deeply engrained appreciation of educational opportunity which has been a driver in seeking out opportunities to lead and make a difference. I have told of my personal story of marital separation, and the impact, both financial and emotional, which led to the need for secure employment when the opportunity arose. I have revealed my acute sense of 'awareness' through the interview process of being a lone parent and the additional challenges that brings (Lynch et al., 2020) for a woman in academia. I have exposed also my sense of just 'surviving' (Lord and Preston, 2009) in those early years and my own bias in terms of how my co-participants might be faring 'better' than I. But I have endeavoured not to let my underlying biases get in the way of the wider story that has been told. These women are not me, their social and cultural biographies are different to mine, but in the end there is a commonality and coherence to the story that we can tell together.

7.2.2 Voice and Positioning

I also needed to acknowledge my *voice and positioning* as a narrative researcher which are fundamental ethical considerations (Kim 2016; Clandinin and Connolly 2000). Hertz (1997, p. viii) states that “as researchers are acknowledged as active participants in the research process, it is essential to understand the researcher's location of self”. As a narrative researcher immersed in the co-construction of the ‘understory’ of the daily lived experiences of female managers in HE, of which I am one myself, I was positioned both as an ‘insider’ within the inquiry and an outsider as the researcher and curator per se of the participants’ stories. This dual positioning provided a unique opportunity for me to explore my own experiences in direct relation to those of the participants – I related to them and recognised myself in them. From the outset, I was fully immersed in this ethnography and emotionally invested in it. I came to the research with ‘insider’, member-knowledge (Johnson, 2002) and I shared some of the characteristics of the collective identity of the participants (Byrne, 2000) and it is this very interpenetration and sharing that defines the narrative inquiry methodology. Both my personal and professional biography helped to create and direct the research – I say ‘direct’ and not ‘dictate’ as the latter would be antithetical to an interpretive epistemology. The reciprocal nature of the relationship between myself and the participants was built on the inter-connectedness and inter-relatedness between my personal and research agenda with that of the participants, what Roth (2005) refers to as the *interpenetration* of our lived experiences.

However, even though I was a co-constructor of the research stories, and so would appear to be on the ‘inside’ with ‘insider-member’ knowledge, I could never truly be considered as an ‘insider’ as we can never be anything but outsiders as researchers (Rasavi, cited in Bridges 2001). By virtue of being the researcher, I was automatically set apart from the participants as I was the one in control of the direction the research and the reporting would take. Conversely, according to Back (2004), even distanced, objective researchers operating in the positivist research paradigm can never be truly ‘outsiders’ either as he notes that “one of the core paradoxes of social and cultural research is that the writer or researcher is

inside the very thing that she or he wishes to understand, in other words, society and culture” (Back 2004, p. 398). Therefore, as researchers we operate in some kind of liminal space, on the boundaries between insiders and outsiders, within and without, and we must walk a fine line and take care not to lose our balance. Borderland positionalities (Clandinin, 2007) are uncertain and contested territories, but we must not be afraid to operate there if we wish to work with epistemologies of personal experience.

7.2.3 Reflexivity

Geertz (1998) insists that to become a convincing ‘I-witness’ the researcher needs to become a convincing ‘I’ while Ellis (2004, p. xix) draws attention to the ‘I’ of the researcher or the part of the researcher that looks out at others but also looks back at itself. Reflexivity can be defined as the crucial “capacity to reflect on our own role in generating research knowledge” (Ali et al., 2004, p. 25). Broadly, it refers to the ability to reflect upon both our actions and our values as we undertake research. Removing the researcher from the research which is a given in the positivistic research paradigm is in fact an attempt to remove the ‘bias’ of the researcher’s values but these can never be anything but present in the qualitative paradigm and I think this is acknowledged and accounted for in the research design. As the researcher, I selected the ontological and epistemological framework; I committed to a postmodern/ poststructuralist feminist lens of interpretation and analysis; I decided what ‘data’ is to be included or omitted; I chose what literature to cite or not, whose voice to include, and to what extent. Hertz (1997, p.viii) contends that this ‘personal accounting’ or self-awareness of how my own positioning is being imposed at each stage of the research process, and the impact of that positioning, is essential to produce “less distorted accounts of the social world”.

Preston (2009) looks at the ethics of dramatised forms of representations and states that the choices made define the paradigm and whether it will speak ‘for’, ‘about’ or ‘with’ a community. As a narrative researcher with ‘insider-member’ knowledge. I intended for this research to speak ‘for’ and ‘with’ the community of my participants and as a feminist

researcher, I set out to say something new (Etorre, 2016) ‘about’ the wider community of women in HE management and leadership. Ellingson (2011, p. 103) claims that feminist researchers need to be aware of the potential pitfalls of claiming to speak for our participants - there is always the danger for research to be ‘colonising’ and unintentionally succeed in the appropriation of already marginalised voices for our own academic ends. However, she proposes that rather than try to let ourselves “off the hook of responsibility by surrendering our practice of writing about others” we should “with great care and humility and good will... continue to represent others and ourselves in our research” (Ellingson, 2011, p. 107).

I am not claiming to speak ‘for’ or ‘about’ women in management and leadership roles in HE in the general. I am instead seeking to give voice to the lived experiences of a small group of mid-career women who found their way into these roles despite the continued barriers that exist (Chapter 2). In arts-based research, there are always going to be shifting tensions between accountability and the aesthetics of the research methodology (Gallagher, Wessels and Yaman Nteilioglou, 2012) but according to Barone and Eisner (2012), arts-based research can be said to have referential validity expressed by the portrayal of human experience such that the stories ‘ring’ true (Bruner, 2004) and are credible portrayals of research data.

7.3 Arts- Based Narrative Research - Balancing Fidelity with Fictionality

7.3.1 Working with the personal

One of the key principles of feminist research is that the ‘personal is political’ (Reid, 2018) and employing personal narrative of lived experience is one means of substantiating and disseminating the feminist message. Working with personal narrative and arts-based inquiry in particular is still a ‘risky enterprise’ in the academy however (Denzin, 1997). Loch and Black (2011, p. 105) write of the pressure that academics feel under to produce research acceptable to the academy, as they risk receiving endless messages about what

counts as research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). The authors speak of the “risks of adventuring” into the arena of their own “experiments with aesthetic ways and forms of communicating and representing experience and knowing – poetry, image, reflection”. But Reid (2018) states that feminism is about taking women’s lived experiences as the starting point and making it political. By making the personal political, hooks (2003, p. xii) talks about the quiet moments that can bring about possible shifts in thought that can bring about radical action. Black, Crimmins and Henderson (2018, p. 540) conclude that their individual and personal stories are directly connected to wider political contexts:

“If we are to understand the workings and impact of larger political discourses and structures, then our sharing of stories together matters”.

(Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2018, p. 540)

This method of working with the personal is a way of “breaking open the hegemonic spaces of the academy” (p. 535) and producing different knowledge, differently. And by working with the personal, inserting the subjectivity of the ‘I’ (Geertz, 1978), we are resisting the hegemonical academic culture of the academy, with its bias against subjectivity (Black, Cummins and Henderson, 2019), which is viewed as “an anathema rather than as valuable resource and therefore considered as a threat” (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013, p.10).

As discussed in Chapter 3, established research practices are rooted in dominant, realist traditions, but recent methodological work in feminist, postmodernist and poststructuralist traditions (Lather, 1991; Fusco, 2008) have shown that what we have taken to be real could be viewed as “more or less a powerful set of fictions” (Davis and Gannon, 2006, p. 2). Llangellier (1999) holds that personal narrative is neither fictive nor non-fictive and is ‘not inauthentic’ as a referential source. The human memory does act as a filter and there is the likelihood of memories not being the ‘truth’, and they may very well be “an embroidered version of the real” (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007, p.63). Davies and Gannon (2006, p. 3) in their ethnographic work (collective biography) acknowledge that they do not take memory to be ‘reliable’ in terms of facticity. The ‘truth’ they take is one which is “worked on through a technology of telling, listening and writing”, which resonates with my

own work co-constructing with the participants (Chapter 4). With epistemologies of experience, the intention I believe is not to seek the 'truth' of the narrated events but to give expression to the human experiences at the heart of those events, and the emotions and feelings in the narration of them.

I chose to work with verbatim so as to remain as faithful as possible to the participants. As discussed in Chapter 4, the creation of the ethnodrama and the transcription of the participant interviews into poetic and story form were done in parallel. In working creatively to craft an ethnodrama in particular, Govan states that it is essentially a means of "offering up" (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007, p. 59) private stories for public consumption. As a consequence, the use of personal narratives in particular as source material can lead to a complex creative process that not only draws from, but reflects upon, real life experiences to shape a piece of ethnodrama. Even using verbatim speech (as it was spoken by the participants and recorded by the researcher) may not inherently be 'non-fictive.' Memory can distort, memory is selective and memory can be used by the teller to re-position themselves in their own biography as they process their own stories and come to new understandings. Personal accounts can therefore only ever be partisan (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007, p. 9) and must be therefore considered as somewhat fictive;

"...the production of autobiography is a result of a reflection upon personal experience that is subjected to the filters of memory and personal editing".

(Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007, p. 60)

Peters (2017, p.37) defines her playwrighting practice as "translating verbatim transcripts through the dramatic languages (elements of drama and conventions) into performance". Verbatim theatre uses the actual spoken words of the participants which have been collated from interviews conducted by the playwright (Cantrell, 2013, p.3) and which tend to be delivered in "first-person address or testimonial style" (Gallagher, Wessels and Nteilioglou, 2012, p. 28). Weighing up the tensions between aesthetics and accountability (Gallagher,

Wessels and Nteilioglou, 2012 p. 37), verbatim has an appeal because of its focus on research fidelity and an inherent ethical responsibility towards the participants.

7.3.2 'Start thinking theatrically'

In ethnodrama, one of the main conflicts to be considered is that between the risks to authenticity and responsibility to reader(ethnodrama) / audience (ethnotheatre). Considering the reader in this light might have implications for the degree to which faithfulness to the research can be maintained as it may be necessary to adapt this strategy in the interest of making good engaging drama. On the other hand, if loyalty and obligation to the participants is to the fore, then it is possible that a sense of guilt or ethical tension for any changes made could surface. However, in the interests of reader engagement, changes might actually be required for aesthetic considerations. For example, Linden Wilkinson, whose ethnodramatic work '*A Day in December*,' features in Ackroyd and O'Toole (2012), states that she set out to use verbatim speech but found that she became more flexible in terms of what was said and who said it for aesthetic purposes. Ethnodramatists have the task of presenting real stories in whatever way *best* tells the story. Therefore the balance between our obligations as social inquirers towards our participants and the artistry demanded as ethnodramatists must be explored. Saldana (2011) urges us to stop thinking like social scientists and to start thinking like artists. As playwrights, we may need to adapt and edit the words to create an aesthetic shape for the audience experience and as such, there should remain some scope for artistic freedom in our research representation.

My first inclination was to do use verbatim in the script, but not slavishly to the point where the reader experience would be compromised. By deciding to use verbatim speech, I was choosing to be faithful to those who spoke the words I sought to use, but this choice undoubtedly created a dilemma – were the interests of the reader/ audience to be taken into account as much as those of the participants? I chose to strike a balance between the use of verbatim speech and the aesthetics of the script, making as few changes to the actual

narrative phrases that were selected for use to make the dramatic arc of the drama. I followed a similar strategy in the crafting of the poetic monologues themselves (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.3 Narrative Smoothing) and when using the speech inserts to Francis's story also (note speech inserts in April's story were based on notes taken, and not transcribed interview material).

Saldana (2008) admits to reading playscripts as a performer, as I do myself as a relatively experienced amateur theatre performer; when I read a play, I read the lines as if I am going to perform them. Saldana says he can see the performance clearly in his head as he reads, as I can - I find a character I would like to play, and 'read' for that character. As I constructed the script, I endeavoured to write for the vocal artistry of the performance as well as for integrity of the research representation. Writing for performance as opposed to writing for a completely textual representation can make a difference. For example, I chose to use verbatim speech for the script but I made minor additions or deletions primarily to build a story arc and/or for clarity of story (Saldana, 2003). I made similar small adjustments to the poetic monologues also with most additions working to support the lyricism of the poem.

Such artistic engagement with the words of the participants were designed to help me build a 'story-telling' relationship with the reader as I would do in performance. For example, in the extract below from Scene 1, 'I' as the composite character tell the audience the story of how I came into the role as Head of Department. The text inside brackets () is added in to make the speech extract fit more naturally into the story of the script. Reading the verbatim lines without the additional phrasing, to my ear, seems spartan and terse. The additional phrases soften the lines, creating a poetic rhythm for the speaker to deliver with more ease, as if I am letting the audience into a secret:

(To be honest)

I think I kind of

fell into the role.

I had been parachuted in (after all).

(And the truth is)

I had the same thoughts,
the same doubts.
(Lines from Scene 1)

When considering both the acts of performance itself and writing for performance, it is important to ask if these are immersed in reality or fiction and if the latter, can fiction represent the reality of experience? I contend that both writing, which according to Soyini-Madison (2005) is a performative act, and performing itself, are both creative acts so that even having constructed the script entirely from verbatim data, the act of weaving together the words of a number of participants must still be viewed as a fictive act. To move on to interpret them in performance would also involve the addition of another layer of fictionality. Fabrication is therefore an integral part of performance and writing for performance (Ackroyd and O'Toole, 2012) but we can allow for degrees of authenticity and if changes are deemed necessary in the interest of artistry, as long as those decisions are justified, there is validity in doing so.

7.3.3 Telling a Story

Another fictionalisation can be the creation of composites, both in terms of story and character - a technique which can also fulfil ethical functions (see below) - but which can also serve as an economical way of representing multiple and complex perspectives and viewpoints about the shared experiences. As an interview text is a momentary record of a narrative experience, it can only ever provide us with a glimpse of a community or individual event, bounded in time and space (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000) and could therefore be considered to be "provisional and untrustworthy" and always to some extent "untypical" (Ackroyd and O'Toole 2012, p.77). The creation of composites in ethnodrama paints characters and events in broad brushstrokes, making and exposing images of transient, ephemeral data and claiming them as such. This technique aligns well with the

impressionistic approach to the narrative analysis of the participant interviews (see Chapter 4).

Another concern is that audiences for ethnographic playscripts can be socialised into expecting a 'grand narrative' with a traditional dramatic arc, but this may not necessarily emerge from verbatim data. Wilkinson (Ackroyd and O'Toole, 2012, p. 77) recalls agonising over the lack of a climax and denouement in her piece but the imperative is always to honour the data and if a dramatic arc does not emerge or is not true to the themes in the participant interviews, then it is important to choose the obligation to the participants over a desire to please the audience with further artifice. Narrative interviews tend not to be temporally ordered (Chase, 2018; King and Horrocks, 2010) and the aim should be to provide a sense of order and flow (Saldana, 2011) such that the story is conveyed in a way that the reader can impose or derive meaning. This might mean that rather like a film director, the playwright as editor must 'splice' text together until a distinctive form emerges, so that the participant interviews are distilled and condensed, and a coherent story emerges. This relies on artistic skill to envision data in a dramatised form, so that the text is recrafted "into a more aesthetic form by deleting unnecessary or irrelevant passages (and) rearranging sequences as necessary for enhancing the structure and flow of the story" (Saldana, 2010, p.63), thereby leaving a sufficient impression or imprint of the story that the playwright wants to tell.

7.3.3.1 Whose Story to Tell?

In the process of being faithful to the participants another consideration is whether all voices should be represented equally? Again, in the interest of balancing "artistry with instrumentality" (Ackroyd and O'Toole 2012, p. 54), that is aesthetic considerations over obligations to the participants, I chose to create balance in this regard, where the overall dramatic experience was best served with the selected speech was the overarching principle. Ethnodrama leaves the drawing of conclusions to the audience and these conclusions are shaped by the scripting process and subsequently in performance, which in

turn is shaped by the playwright's constructions and biases. I come back again to the balance between fidelity and fictionality, and how to achieve this, because even using verbatim speech, even implementing strategies such as deciding to give each participant 'equal time', no matter how hard we try as human beings among other human beings, it is a further fiction to assume complete researcher objectivity (Ackroyd and O'Toole 2012, p.56) and as a researcher in the postmodern, poststructuralist tradition, I understand and accept this premise. As the researcher and ethnodramatist I ultimately make and take the decisions (Brinkmann, 2018). In the end, I decide how much of each participant contribution is used, who gets to speak and say what and what is the thrust of the message that is to be conveyed. As the ethnodramatist, I ultimately decide what story to tell and will always have the last word. It is therefore a very powerful position to be in – I hold the power to affect what emerges into the academic domain. Ethnodramatists must therefore always ask just whose story is this and we must always justify our decisions (Saldana, 1998).

There is an underlying moral imperative to respect the stories given. All stories are equally valid but some are more pertinent than others perhaps, depending on the context and the message. Choices must be made and as ethical researchers, we need to be accountable for these. I made selections for inclusions or not based on the need to tell a coherent story for the reader emanating from multiple storied lives – I had to emplot the narratives to create that story and that meant making choices. The justification for each scene in the script is outlined in Appendix 2, with the broad brushstrokes of emplotment discussed in Section 7.4 below.

7.3.3.2 A Composite Character

I have already stated that the process of constructing the script was strongly informed by my original research intentions to perform. As a researcher with a 'stock of knowledge' to draw from and who was also a collaborator in the story-sharing and knowledge creation, I felt confident that I could inhabit the character(s) authentically (Ackroyd and O'Toole, 2012). From the outset, primarily for ethical considerations, I had envisioned blending

characters to create a composite or hybrid. This strategy would allow me to stay loyal to the data while protecting the participants' identities and involves amalgamating and blending stories from the participant narratives in a process of narrative smoothing (Kim, 2016). Saldana informs us that composite characters can be readily created when several interviews refer to similar themes or stories, as in my research (Saldana, 2011). Even though composites are fictional creations, they can represent the 'collective' and speak of the shared realities of the participants in the same way that an actor in conventional theatre has the facility to 'walk in another's shoes' on stage.

During the workshopping phase of the script development, one of the elements I needed to look at was the need for, or not as the case may be (Wilkinson, cited in Ackroyd and O'Toole 2012), a dramatic arc and possible plot lines that could create such an arc, emerging from the tabulated narrative extracts. Embedded in this discussion was the need to decide on the 'principal' character, who would carry the story forward. Even though the principal character would be a composite, this character still needed to have her own backstory, and her own trajectory through the story that was to unfold before her, with her own ending. Even though her words would be 'real' or verbatim, taken relatively intact from the participant interviews and broadly representative across all of the participants and our experiences, the creation of a composite character is an artifice, and she was therefore going to be fictive. As such, her journey through the 'lived' experiences would also be fictive - I needed to create that journey for her, and I decided to make 'aesthetic' decisions as the ethnodramatist in favour of artistry over social inquiry (Saldana 2011; Ackroyd and O'Toole, 2012).

The trajectory the composite character follows is that of Julie, who eventually left her organisation because she tells us that she found it so hard to 'fit into the mould' they (senior management) wanted her to fit into. In Chapter 5, Julie's story come across as strongly 'resistive' as she seemed to be constantly battling in her role, conflicted in her desire to be creative and innovative under the new-managerialist regime in which she operated. Julie's story seemed to be in alignment with the over-arching story of these women Heads of Department, who each in their own way was resisting the culture of the masculinist, neo-

liberalist institution, with “their feminine ways of knowing” and “being” in the role (Black, Cummins and Henderson, 2019, p. 540). As the ethnodramatist and researcher, it is in fact therefore not ‘my’ story, as I am still in the role within my institution. Of the other participants, however, four of them have left the management role they discussed as part of the research process (resignation, retirement, stepping back, stepping sideways) so the trajectory of the composite character is representative in that sense.

7.3.4 A Balancing Act

The biggest struggle for the novice ethnodramatist is to balance the artistic with the authentic, the fictional with research fidelity, a dilemma which often means making and taking decisions about what to leave in and what to leave out. When struggling with freedom of artistic expression versus researcher discretion, Saldana’s (2011) imperative is honour the data and ensure the participants’ views are being represented. That necessarily means that the order of priority should be participant first, audience second and research third. Fictionality can play its part in biography or personal narrative, but there is an ethical responsibility to be ‘truthful’ and this can be achieved by entering into a contract with the reader so that they are fully informed in advance as to what the purposes of the research are, for example, and how the playscript came about. Audiences need to know in advance that while the material is non-fictive, our *engagement* with it as researchers may be fictive. I have endeavoured to outline the efforts I made to achieve that balance.

Theatre needs to entertain and so we may need to take aesthetic steps to create an engaging piece of ethnodrama. For me, the use of verbatim enhances the authentic voice – it has the ‘mark’ of being ‘real’ (Loots, 2016) - but where editing needed to be done for aesthetic reasons, I did make changes, and recorded these. Strategies such as stylisation and imposing dramatic structure by fictionalising the non-fictive can help to achieve the goal of encouraging the reader/ audience of literary arts-based output of narrative inquiry to more actively engage.

7.4 Staging Feminism

Heddon (2006) claims what appears to have prevailed across the various ideological shifts in feminism has been the “implicit value of personal experience” (Heddon, 2006, p. 143). The use of the personal in performance was initiated by ‘second wave’ feminism in the 1960s and led to the growth of the autobiographical, solo or ‘memoir’ performance genre. The popularity and extent of performative autobiography and autoethnography means that it has become a very diverse practice but Heddon (2006, p. 133) considers it in all its manifestations as being broadly political, citing Spry on its capacity to allow her to speak her ‘personal’ as ‘political’ in public, which she contends has been both liberating and enabling. Equally, and not necessarily conversely, both Aston and Harris (2006) and Dolan (2007, 2012) view feminist performance as having a strong attachment to collective and collaborative theatre practices - working together can allow for the kind of “painstaking negotiation across sites of difference” (Aston and Harris 2006, p. 4) from which feminist futures and the ‘not yet’ can emerge. I have written for solo performance from work that has emerged from a collaborative engagement with participants about lived, personal experience and hence I say that these two facets of feminist theatre practice – the personal and the collaborative - are not necessarily exclusive of one another.

Dolan (2007) considers exemplars of feminist performance to be those that address gender as a “constituent” issue – in other words, not just in terms of form or content, but in terms of how identity is used to give or deny voice and how such performances gesture towards a community beyond identity politics “into a more capricious, even humanist, political condition” (Dolan, 2007, p. 213). What continues to give Dolan hope is that feminist performance can still bring about transformation and the “exquisite” (Dolan 2007, p. 213) possibility of better futures. Aston and Harris (2006) observe that feminism has always been self-reflexive, capable of evolving and adapting to new political ideas, so that it has never been something that we need a nostalgic longing to ‘get back to’ as feminism has always been, and continues to be, about futures and possibilities; the future is always *in* question and is always *the* question (Aston and Harris, 2006, p.3).

In her manifesto for feminist performance, to succeed in bringing about such transformation and to “change the world”, Dolan (2007) calls for us to write it and teach it, to proselytise and preach it, to create and produce it, to see it and talk about it, to be both spectator and artist, critic and audience. By choosing to disseminate my research findings in the form of an ethnodrama, I am endeavouring to answer this call:

“For feminist performance to change the world, we must continue to dream that it can change for the better, that utopia, as a tangible force for wishful thinking ... can fuel our passion to imagine the world as it might be, rather than acquiescing to the world as it is”.

(Dolan. 2007, p. 219)

7.5 The Script

As a narrative inquirer seeking to ‘dramatise the data’ and ‘think theatrically’, these are the aspects of writing that I needed to consider as I set about drafting the script drawing from the threads of the participant stories, navigating the spaces and borderlands between reality and pretence, truth and fiction, identity and voice, and between performer and audience. The script is presented below as a sequence of vignettes or short scenes, with each of the character’s lines numbered. As discussed in Chapter 4, I have used a poetic form (in stanzas) created from the participant monologues and stories.

A full discussion and justification of the verbatim speech extracts (referenced by line number) is provided in Appendix 3, along with suggestions for the ‘mise-en-scene’, use of props, costuming and sound, which are referred to in the stage directions.

A rehearsed reading has been recorded and included on CD³⁶ in Appendix 1. It must be noted that this final script has been written and presented here as I would envisage it in full

³⁶ Wav. format for soft copy

performance, with one technical support person for light, sound, multi-media slides and audio cues.

All of the monologue is verbatim from the field material, unless it is in (), which are words I added in for continuity or clarity of the story, as discussed in Chapter 4.

7.5.1 'Being There' – an Ethnodrama

The Overture

[Slide Projection: Contemporary dance performance, lyrics of the suggested song's chorus superimposed. Approx. 30 secs.]

"I'm headed straight for the castle,

They wanna make me their queen

And there's an old man sitting on the throne

That's saying

That I probably shouldn't be so mean.

I'm headed straight for the castle,

They've got the kingdom locked up

And there's an old man sitting on the throne

That's saying

I should probably keep my pretty mouth shut

Straight for the castle".

(Lines from 'Castle', by Halsey)

Scene 1 – The Tower

Overture fades out and slide projection transitions to an image of a ‘fairy-tale’ castle with a high tower, with the words Scene 1 – The Tower. Lights come up to reveal upstage centre, the actress wearing plain black trousers, flat shoes and white shirt with a pair of glasses around her neck, perched on a table, kneeling, head bent. There is a cardboard box on the floor underneath the table. A coat stand, downstage right, with a black suit jacket hanging. A sweeping brush leans against the coat stand.

[She looks up but stays kneeling and addresses the audience directly, in a quiet, ethereal manner]

The room they gave me had no windows.	1
I couldn't be... with my group,	2
my normal social group.	3
I wanted to stay (with them) ...	4
but they told me I couldn't.	5
I found it very strange,	6
because...I was ... on my own....	7
And people only came	8
when they had a problem	9
when they wanted something...	10

[Rising to a stand on the table, looking down as if from a great height]

[Music, bars from ‘It’s so Quiet’ by Bjork]

[She brings her finger to her lips, as if to hush the audience, so she can hear better]

I found it (so) very strange.	11
It found it... so very quiet.	12
I could hear whisperings... (outside)	13

[The chorus starts, an audio recording of male and female voices together, muttering and low whispering of the following lines. On each beat, she moves as if confined in a cage]

(beat) They'd give anyone that job these days.

(beat) Who does she think she is? She is only in the door.

(beat) Who is she? Why is she here?

[Music fades. She addresses the audience in a slightly louder, more earthly voice]

I found it (so) lonely... 14

I found it (so) isolated. 15

(And the ones that had been here before told me) 16

that the higher up you go 17

the more isolated (it would be) ... 18

(I would) have to push even harder to be included. 19

[Chorus resumes. On each beat, looking skyward, she 'pushes' the walls of her confined space out]

(beat) She doesn't have the qualifications,

(beat) She doesn't have the background, everyone knows that.

(beat) Why would anyone decide to put her here?

(I knew) a lot of people were against me 20

before they even knew me. 21

I was a complete stranger to them. 22

[Chorus continues, male voices only this time. She stands still this time, listening]

(beat) She's only getting it because we don't want it (male)

(beat) Who is she to manage me? (male)

(beat) Is she going to be bossing me? (male)

[Jumping off table she falls to the ground, lands on her knees, then rises to a stand. Stronger, more normal voice, efficient, office-like]

(To be honest) 23

I think I just kind of 24

fell into the role. 25

I had been parachuted in (after all)	26
(And the truth is)	27
I had the same thoughts,	28
the same doubts.	29
I suppose I was very {unsure} in the beginning,	30
because I was from (a completely different) background.	31
<i>[She picks up the 'box' under the table, and moves briskly as if 'moving into her new office']</i>	
People were very kind to me, don't get me wrong, and congratulated me...	32
<i>[She takes out an artificial bunch of flowers from the box]</i>	
But I remember that first day	33
because I got offered the job on a Friday.	34
And I met (a lecturing colleague of mine) in the car park	35
and I said <i>[turning to address a character who is not on stage]</i>	36
"Hi, how are you? "	37
and she said to me	38
"Oh I can't talk to you (anymore) because you are management."	39
And I said	40
"What? Really?"	41
I couldn't believe it because I had never felt like that myself about management. Ever.	42
<i>[Setting up her 'office' while addressing the audience, she moves the table to downstage right, at an angle, taking laptop from the box and putting on the 'desk', a phone, some files, a box of hankies, a small bin, a coffee cup.</i>	
I never wanted to be a Head as such.	43
I had no aspirations.	44
It (certainly) wasn't anything to do with me really wanting it...	45
It was personal.	46

I needed the flexibility for the kids.	47
In my naivety, I thought it would be easy.	48
So I applied and I couldn't believe that I got it...	49
I didn't really expect that I was going to get it.	50
I felt I wasn't really ready...	51
that there were a number of <i>[hesitates]</i>	52
shortcomings in my application.	53
I felt that I wasn't at that level.	54
(In the end it was) a pragmatic decision...	55
I needed it for the money and the flexibility ...	56
I could continue to tread water for some years,	57
and then see, or just go for it.	58
What can I lose, I thought?	59
Only my mind, apparently.	60

[The 'office' is ready. Music (It's so Quiet) starts up again, a little louder this time. She sits at the desk looking a bit lost and alone and hears the mutterings again from 'outside' the door, but this time the voices are more distinct]

Chorus

(beat) Is there integrity to giving her the position?

(beat) Will she be able to represent us, fight for us, promote us?

(beat) Because she is not a part of us.

[Music stops suddenly]

Scene 2 - The Honeymoon

[Slide projection transitions to a new slide with the words Scene 2 – The Honeymoon overlaid with a ‘happy ever after’ image of a ‘fairy-tale wedding’]

[She reaches for the flowers in the vase and puts them in the bin]

There was no honeymoon for me. 1

It was straight in. No training, no induction. Nothing. 2

I really thought that someone would show you what to do 4

(On that first morning) my boss came in. 4

[She rises to a stand, comes out in front of the desk, puts on the glasses, assuming the personality of her boss]

“Can you handle the first meeting (on your own)?” she asked. 5

“But what am I supposed to do at this meeting?” I replied. 6

“What am I supposed to say to them?” 7

I would really like the chance to read up on things first.” 8

[She grabs a file from the desk, flicks through it]

“You know, take the time to educate myself, 9

get to know the ins and outs of everything before I” 10

[Calls after her boss who has already left the office. She reaches down and takes out a pair of high heel shoes from her box and puts them on. Goes to coat stand and puts on suit jacket and takes off the glasses. As if looking at a full-length mirror, she smooths down her clothes, nervously but admiringly, and says to herself:

At least I am dressed for the part. 11

[She runs across the stage as if catching up with her boss. The projection transitions ominously to a forest setting, as if there are a pack of wolves circling...]

My boss walks into the meeting ahead of me. 12

[She puts on the glasses again, taking on the persona of her boss]

“Ok, everyone, this is your new Head of Department. I’m going to go now”. 13

[She takes off the glasses again, addresses the audience nervously as herself]

And there I was. Thrown to the wolves, like ... 14

Like a lamb to the slaughter. 15

(The room was full to the brim. 16

There were more of them than I thought). 17

I (realised) that I was a complete stranger to them. *[pauses and repeats]* 18

.... a complete stranger. 19

They had never even heard of me. 20

There wasn't even a reputation preceding me. 21

But they had the measure of me because I was in management. 22

So if I'm in management, I have to be a certain thing. 23

Which was negative. 24

I couldn't possibly be positive in anyway. 25

[She turns away from the audience slightly, as if nervously addresses the meeting]

"Ok, as you all know I don't know the first thing about this... 26

and I'm relying on you to teach me everything you know..." 27

Looking back, that might not have been the best way to start. 28

I was theirs for the taking. 29

They knew they could shape me and mould me as they wanted. 30

[Music bars from 'It's so quiet' starts up, slowed down a bit, in sympathy with her mood. She walks slowly back to the office, downstage right and sits behind desk, looking deflated. Music fades]

There was no job description, 31

no guidelines whatsoever. 32

I really thought that there would be some training, 33

that someone would explain to you. 34

After that first meeting, an old male lecturing colleague called in to see me. 35

[Leaning forward in her seat, she speaks as if to him directly, frustrated]

“So what am I supposed to do? 36

How do I handle things? 37

What do I do if someone comes in complaining? 38

What do I say to them?” 39

[She takes on his persona by leaning back in the seat, arms stretched out behind his head, supremely confident, legs crossed]

“See how it goes. Don’t worry, sit back, relax... 40

It will come to you, they’ll come to you 41

They’ll come to you 42

When they want something.... 43

And they won’t say no to you, you know. 44

If your skirt is a bit shorter, you might even get a bit more”, 45

Well he was right about one thing 46

they did come looking 47

and they haven’t stopped since 48

[Recording of sounds of phone ringing, knocking on the door, cacophonous chorus of ‘demands’]

[Slide projection transitions to an image of a factory production line with a conveyor belt]

I usually start Monday feeling unburdened. 49

But by the time lunchtime comes... 50

I feel very burdened (and overworked) 51

[Frantically moving files around on the desk. Seen to wipe brow]

I’m often here past eight o’ clock. The days are so long 52

[Recording of clock strikes the hour]

The days are so long and I seem to be running around	53
like a lunatic.	54
<i>[She walks quickly around the desk a number of times, picking up files and putting them down]</i>	
<i>[The chorus of male and female voices starts up again]</i>	
<i>(Beat) She spends her time fixing things for us.</i>	
<i>(Beat) She spends her time mending {things} for us.</i>	
<i>(Beat) She spends her time picking up the pieces for us.</i>	
I spend my time leaping and lurching,	54
from one (task) to the next....	55
And if I find some space	56
Or if I get some help,	57
I suddenly try to do more of the things I haven't been doing...	58
I seem to expand to fill the vacuum.	59
<i>[Running around in a circle, as if making herself bigger to fill the vacuum. She is out of breath now]</i>	
They're long days and in those long days	60
I still can't get everything done.	61
<i>[Running again]</i> I just can't.	62
<i>[She accidentally knocks the coffee cup on floor while rushing around. She stops suddenly]</i>	
The day is so long,	63
and I am doing so much,	64
that sometimes I take the easiest path,	65
the path of least resistance....	66
<i>[She takes the brush and sweeps the broken china cup under the table.]</i>	
And if I have to (bring my work) home,	67

I'm shouting and roaring at the kids 68
"Get to bed, now" 69
Just so I can go on the computer 70
and get ahead of myself for tomorrow. 71

[She flops down behind desk and falls asleep at computer]

[Music: Bars from 'It's so quiet', like a lullaby. Light fades]

Scene 3 - 'Sometimes there are tears...'

[Lighting as if morning. She comes forward to stand in front of the desk, addressing audience. Projection transitions with the words Scene 3- Sometimes there are tears...]

I actually don't think you can manage (academic staff). 1

I don't think you can. 2

And it's not just because some of them have contrary personalities. 3

It's because of the way (things) are set up. 4

It's all very grey about what they will and won't do. 5

I feel like ... {they} are actually almost {in} the lead... 6

because they have so much power, and control and free rein. 7

It's like they have the bread, the butter and the jam! 8

They run with their own agenda, their own ideas, 9

(sometimes) in good faith and with good intentions, 10

but it's never... as good as it could have been 11

if they had just come to me first. 12

[Goes and sits behind desk]

They think it's ok to ask forgiveness (afterwards) rather than permission (first). 13

<i>[Speaking as if to a staff member sitting opposite her, slightly aghast]</i>	
(You've done what? But that is <u>not</u> what we agreed when we last met)	14
<i>[Addressing the audience again]</i>	
(When) something goes wrong,	15
I want to trust they will come back and tell me.	16
Things go wrong all the time.	17
And trust is important – (I will shoulder the blame for them, you see)	18
Upper management does not support middle management;	19
if there's (trouble) you're left to fight your own corner.	20
I (want) to praise people, and give them recognition	21
for what they do.	22
I (want) to say things like	23
“Thanks for that, that was a great job, well done.”	24
You know, I like the softer approach,	25
a gentle pushing.	26
To get them to follow the path	27
that you (need) them to follow.	28
But sometimes, I have to make decisions,	29
when people don't want to do things	30
and I say to them that they have to do them,	31
it's their job,	32
there isn't an option.	33
And sometimes there are tears...	34
<i>[Reaches for box of hankies as if to hand it to the 'staff member' sitting opposite, but in fact dabs at own eyes]</i>	

I say	35
<i>[Addressing the staff member sitting opposite her]</i>	
“Look, I don’t like working like this.	36
So let’s sort it out,	37
it will be done and dusted,	38
it will be in the past and we can move on again.”	39
But she says to me	40
“... it’s not fair that you would do that to me”	41
And I tell her	42
“But somebody else had to do exactly the same.”	43
You know I would try to balance it, explain.	44
My philosophy is that you don’t have to agree with everything I do,	45
but at least you might understand why.	46
<i>[Rising to stand]</i>	
I say	47
“Look, let’s have a cup of coffee and sort it out...”	48
But she shakes her head as she leaves the office and says	49
“No, I can’t really do that anymore, because you’re in management now.”	50
(Yes, I was a manager now. I just had to accept all that it entailed)	51
<i>[She takes things off table and puts on floor. Moves table to centre stage, places chair behind the table, facing audience directly. Takes her seat, shushes the audience again, as if whispering to them, conspiratorially, witnessing the action at the boardroom table on their behalf]</i>	
It was a lonely place (in the boardroom),	52
the men	53

all sitting together. The men, 54
they were always so big into praising each other. 55

[She turns to the right and the left, clapping her neighbours on the back, congratulating them]

They were clapping the fellow to the right 56

and then the fellow to the left. 57

I just wanted to go in and get the job done, you know. 58

So I said, *[putting her hand up]* 59

“Can we get on with the meeting please? (I have rather a lot to do)” 60

And they stopped and turned to look at me as if to say: 61

[Chorus starts up, just male voices, accusatorially]

Chorus :

(beat) “Who are you to break up this cycle?

(beat) Are you upset today?

(beat) Are you having a bad hair day?”

It was a ‘boys club’ 62

And I felt... brushed aside 63

[She pauses for a moment, to emphasise the sense of ‘otherness’, not belonging]

And I got so tired of hearing at every meeting, 64

the same, 65

[Standing up addressing the meeting, puts the glasses on again, and speak as if one of the senior men]

“I just want to acknowledge the great work being done by our (esteemed) colleague, 66

where would we be without him, sure the place could not survive”. 67

[She sits down again]

And I <u>wanted</u> to stand up and say	68
“But our workloads are incomparable	69
my School is so much bigger,	70
I have twice the number of staff,	71
three times the number of students,	72
more, and here is the list of all the things I do...”	73
But I didn’t.	74
I stayed sitting.	75
I stayed... Silent.	76
<i>[She comes out from behind the desk]</i>	
 (After the meeting, my old lecturing colleague came to me again and said)	77
“Look at you,	78
aren’t you so lucky to be surrounded by all these men!” he said.	79
“What men?” I replied. “You mean my colleagues?”	80
 (I wanted) to put my marker down-	81
(I wanted) to see men as my equals.	82
(And me as theirs – but I was not so sure anymore)	83
<i>[Takes off high heel shoes and throws them to the side, back towards the office]</i>	
(Lucky me indeed!)	84
 <i>[Music: Bars from ‘It’s so quiet’, very hushed, like a lullaby...]</i>	

Scene 4 - The Doormat!

[Music fades. She is lying on the table, as if exhausted, drained. Slide transitions to read Scene 4 – The Doormat. Her opening lines are delivered to the ceiling]

I spend my time trying to keep everyone happy.	1
I am constantly looking after the needs of others,	2
always looking after others.	3
<i>[Chorus starts up, male and female voices]</i>	
<i>(beat) We are never satisfied</i>	
<i>(beat) We are never happy</i>	
<i>[Sitting up, she addresses the audience face on]</i>	
They are never happy.	4
One or two seem to be happy occasionally	5
but sometimes {even} they aren't happy.	6
There is a constant draw,	7
a constant sucking of energy.	8
I find it so draining.	9
<i>[She gets off the table as if being pulled off, by unseen strings, and pulled around the stage in every direction]</i>	
The days that I find the most difficult	10
are when I find {they} are pulling out of me,	11
all the time pulling out of me...	12
give, give, give...	13
and there's nothing coming back.	14
I find that very hard...	15
It's like 30 children	16
... pulling out of me.	17

[She suddenly stops and stands still]

So I took a week off... and I went 18

To stay in a place with no mobile service, no wifi... 19

I could only get mobile service in one of the bedrooms. 20

I spent most of the time either in the car 21

driving, so I could answer the phone 22

Or standing in the corner of that bedroom. 23

They knew I was on holidays 24

They knew I was away. 25

They said to me before I left 26

'Oh God, you definitely need a break!' 27

And when I came back they said 28

'Oh isn't it lovely to be able to take a few days off!' 29

[She sits on the edge of the stage on the floor, near enough so that she is almost 'confessional' now with the audience]

And there are no opportunities... to bitch and moan. 30

I know that sounds terrible... 31

but everybody needs to let off some steam. 32

It's just human nature, isn't it? 33

You know, sometimes I just want to say 34

"that B****' or whatever – I could have torn her hair out." 35

I don't really mean it but sometimes I just (want) to let go, 36

just say it out and then go back into that office and start again. 37

But there's nowhere to do that. 38

I have to keep it inside,	39
and then it just festers and festers...	40
and I begin to doubt <i>myself</i> , and say things like	41
“Am I thinking badly of (someone) when I shouldn’t... ?”	42
Am I a terrible person for thinking like that? “	43
But I have nobody to sound off with you see.	44
There’s no support,	45
no personal support if you know what I mean...	46
because it’s mostly men at the top...	47
And the men don’t see the need for (that).	48
But they recognise the need to have women	49
caring for the ones on the ground though...	50
listening to their moaning and groaning,	51
but <i>they</i> won’t listen to it.	52
It’s <i>our</i> job to listen to it because we’re women.	53
But I don’t want to do the mothering anymore,	54
I’ve had enough of it...	55
this constant giving.	56
I’m tired of looking after them.	57
I’m worn out.	58
Because with children they grow up.	59
These don’t seem to ever grow up!	60
I want to mother my own children, not them.	61

Why do we bring our mothering into the office?	62
Is it because we want to be liked?	63
Is it because we want to show a little bit of humanity?	64
Because if you are a woman in management,	65
you can only ever be	66
a cold-hearted bitch	67
or an absolute doormat!	68
There isn't anything in between.	69
It's nicer to be the doormat.	70
You've some chance of getting something positive back	71
But you have no hope at all if you're the other one.	72
And yet	73
would you be respected more if you were the other,	74
the cold-hearted bitch?	75
But you know,	76
if there were a hundred and ten ways to get ahead in this place,	77
one of them would not be...	78
being the doormat!	79

[She turns and pushes the table, upstage, where it was in the beginning]

[Music – Bars from It's so Quiet, including new bars from the louder section].

Scene 5 - Once I was a Warrior

[She stands on the table again, as she was in the opening scene, but her stance is strong, she stands tall, legs astride, hands planted on hips, defiant. Slide transitions to Scene 5 – Once I was a warrior']

(When I was starting off), I really pushed myself.	1
I didn't see any limitations.	2
I was quite confident, (adventurous)	3
even.	4
I've always worked hard.	5
I'm the breadwinner you see,	6
The major-earner.	7
<i>[She jumps off the table]</i>	
(I grew up with boys)	8
<i>[She moves as if being pushed and shoved, as if playing with boys. Sounds of a mixed schoolyard]</i>	
(The outdoors was my playground,	9
never the kitchen.	10
I played my brother's games.	11
I learnt what they learnt.	12
I was taught what they were taught.)	13
I could talk their talk. (Or so I thought)	14
I was comfortable with men.	15
Not every woman is I know.	16
So when I went for the job,	17
I really thought I could help build things,	18
shape things.	19
Have a voice at the table...	20
Maybe I was testing myself too when I went for the job ...	21
Maybe I could do that? (Could I do that?)	22
Maybe there was a bit of me	23

that wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. 24
That I could play... with the big boys. 25
I find it hard to accept now that is why I went for it. 26
Ego. 27

{She is pensive for a moment, then stands on the chair this time, as if trying to take control of a meeting}

They asked me to go in 28
and 'quell the mob' 29
at difficult staff meetings. 30
(They thought I was good for that) 31
Sometimes it was like going into a nest of vipers 32
Hissing and snapping at your heels. 33

[Chorus starts up again]

(beat) They'd give anyone that job these days.

(beat) Who do you think you are? You are only in the door.

Other times, they were like neglected children, 34
hurt and wounded. 35

[Chorus]

(beat) Who are you to manage me? (male voice)

(beat) Are you going to be bossing me? (male voice)

They began to hunt in packs. 36

[Chorus]

(beat) Why would anyone decide to put you here?

(beat) Because you are not a part of us.

And it was just too hard to be 37

in that masculine playground all the time. 38

[She jumps off the chair, goes back towards the 'office', and starts to pack up, putting things into the box]

I suppose my (female) boss leaving was a big issue for me. 39

My new boss, 40

he operated in a very bureaucratic way 41

and well, having to have everything I did pre-approved, 42

the negative feedback I received about everything. 43

I was stifled, utterly, utterly stifled. 44

I couldn't work that way... 45

I knew it would get me into trouble. 46

He wouldn't be happy and I wouldn't be happy. 47

I would be constantly on edge about whether I checked things 48

and double-checked things. 48

I mean, I *could* have worked in that system, 50

but I didn't want to. 51

And that's where I had come to. 52

It just didn't sit right with me anymore. 53

I was working against myself... 54

I was doing it just to get paid, 55

to pay the bills, 56

but it didn't make sense anymore.	57
I couldn't justify it.	58
"It's not you," I said to him, "it's me."	59
You know, it's funny	60
but I almost think (he) saw it as a betrayal.	61
I really think (he) felt betrayed,	62
Like I had turned sides.	63
He said	64
"What can we do to make you stay?"	65
And I said, "Nothing"	66
"I've had enough!"	67
Looking back, I think I had become a bit of a lone ranger too.	68
Perhaps I had become my own worst enemy.	69
I find it hard to fit into the mould	70
that they want me to fit into and I always did.	71
It could be a problem that I have and not them as such,	72
but I think by fitting into the mould,	73
you lose what makes you good at something	74
don't you?	75
<i>[She takes one last admiring look at herself in the mirror and smiles to indicate that she is happy with herself as she is, and with her decision]</i>	
That's my story. I've told it and in your hands I leave it.	76
<i>[Exits</i>	
<i>Reprise of opening recorded dance piece to music bard from 'Castle' by Halsey to close.]</i>	

7.6 Epilogue

Kim (2016, p. 228) talks about the concept of the musical coda (or the flourish which brings a musical piece to an end) as the researcher's signature, her 'stamp' on the work as it were (Clandinin and Connolly, 200, p. 48). My research signature has been to shape narratives of women's lived experiences into a storied, coherent 'retelling', as part of a literary arts-based narrative inquiry. It is not the only story that could be told, and the characters are not in themselves representative, but I have instead created a composite story by pulling and stitching and patching together (Boland, 2001) story threads from across all of the participant narratives in an attempt to say something new to the reader in the form of an ethnodrama. I hope that I have achieved what Kim (2016, p. 230) refers to as the necessary "balancing act" and that my signature is neither too strong nor too weak to be meaningful, authentic and honest.

Chapter 8 ‘Looking Backwards to go Forwards’

“... we learn from the past through emotionally important events, perceive the present in the light of that learning and then project the lesson into the future”.

(Hustvedt, 2016, p. 82)

8.1 Unravelling the story threads of lived experience

Story is central to the human quest for understanding the world we live in and our place in the world (Ellis, 2004).

“The lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist each other’s assistance in building lives and communities”.

(Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p. 35)

I set out to explore the lived experiences of women in management and leadership in HE in Ireland, women who conduct their daily working lives in what still remains a predominantly male dominated environment (Lynch et al. 2020; O’ Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; O’Keefe, 2020; HEA 2018a; Harford, 2018; Morley, 2014; Newcomb et al., 2013; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012; Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011; Lynch, 2010; Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen, 2008).

Lentin (2000) posits that stories or personal narratives can be used to make sense of 'constructing' rather than 're-constructing' lives. Narrative inquiry and story sharing as a research methodology is a good 'fit' therefore with a feminist research praxis. Examining story-sharing as a survival tool for women in academic leadership roles in Australia, Lord and Preston (2009, p. 70) drew on the leadership experiences of one of the authors “and her sense making or conversations with the other” to reflect on and “talk” their experience as a means of discovery. Fundamental to this narrative inquiry, the interviews with my co-participants were for me a similar experience of ‘talking’ our experience as a means of discovery and knowledge creation.

I met with 6 women, all of whom were, at some point in their recent careers, in academic management as Heads of Department in the IoT sector, and one who had been promoted to position of Head of School, over a period of 15 months. In the case of all of my co-participants I had an established prior professional relationship. As a literary arts-based narrative inquiry, the co-constructed stories that emerged from our engagements were 'told', 'retold' and 're-presented', the story threads stitched together and interpreted in the form of creative non-fiction stories and poetic monologues, culminating in the crafting of a short ethnographic playscript, written for performance for dissemination purposes.

As a feminist inquirer, I see myself in Byrne (2000), who set out her credentials for her own research project on feminine identity as follows:

“An awareness of difference, an interest in feminist ideas as well as a concern with the treatment and perception of women in Irish society are intertwined in the development of the research topic”.

(Byrne, 2000, p.142)

She further notes that she cannot “absolutely say where this topic has come from, but only that it is connected to me”. Similarly, I cannot absolutely say where my particular topic came from other than emerging from my own lived experiences as a woman in the role of a Head of Department in a HEI in Ireland, and in particular an IoT (Institute of Technology), over the last decade or so. I wanted to make sense of my own gendered experiences by examining the experiences of others like me, but who are not me.

As I teased and unravelled the story threads in the participant narratives, adopting a poststructuralist, feminist lens of inquiry, I endeavoured to offer the reader a glimpse into the daily realities of lives lived as women in a male-dominated management environment of the neo-liberalist HEI sector in Ireland, where we are the perpetual outsider (Kolbenschlag, 1979), the 'other' to the standard or reference point that is the 'male' (de Beauvoir, 2009; Butler, 1999). I contend that these story threads capture very personal experiences of negotiating power through acts of small but strategic resistances (Foucault, 1994; 1980) in the “hyper-masculinist” (Harford, 2018) model of new-managerialism that

prevails in the sector in Ireland (O'Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p. 137) and that these stories mirror similar accounts of lived experiences internationally (Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2019; Black and Garvis, 2018; Lord and Preston, 2009; Davies and Gannon, 2006).

8.2 Fresh Insight – Contributions to New Knowledge

“The epistemology of experience gives voice to the oppressed and to the naming of their reality”.

(Cousins, 2010, p.12)

Beasley (1994, p.41) states that feminist thought is in a very fluid state, and therefore I as much as anyone could develop and articulate a new position or synthesis of approaches which could open up new ways of looking at and thinking about how women are in the world. It could be argued that the story threads pulled and teased out from the participant narratives in this arts-based narrative inquiry do not necessarily bring to the discourse ‘new’ facts or information - this knowledge is already there in the literature cited extensively in this thesis and summarised above. It could be argued that this research simply builds on that corpus of knowledge, adding more evidence of individual women’s daily lived gendered experience of their workplace. However, I contend that this inquiry adds value and brings fresh insight by virtue of the fact that these are just that – ‘small stories’ (Kim, 2016) of *individual women’s personal and lived experiences* which give meaningful expression to the larger stories in the wider discourse. Through these storied impressions that I have created, I have endeavoured to open the reader up to new ways of looking at the everyday world these women professionals inhabit (Kim, 2016, p. 140). The adoption of narrative inquiry as both methodology and method in this research undertaking has also served to create a nascent space for innovative, co-constructed, localised knowledges worthy of social inquiry which can contribute to the wider discourse of gender inequality into the future.

By virtue of its unique philosophical and methodological framework – a literary arts-based narrative inquiry – these stories lay bare very personal and subjective experiences in the career biographies of individual women, including myself, whose stories matter precisely because they are individuals, and individuals matter (Holman-Jones, 2016).

8.2.1 Contribution 1 – the ‘place of the personal’ in qualitative research³⁷

By forefronting the personal as political (Reid, 2018), feminist activism has placed a value on the centrality of personal experience in the socio-political domain, and feminist research praxis has followed, despite the vulnerability and unpredictability that goes with the territory of the personal. Emotionality and subjectivity are perceived by many in the academy as “an anathema” (Grant, Short and Turner, 2013, p.10). In particular, the world of our human experience, of care and emotion, are all considered to be ‘feminine’ and unpredictable (Ellis, in Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015). Feminism and feminist writers have strongly influenced social research and contributed significantly to legitimising the biographical voice in social inquiry (Etorre, 2016; Hamdan, 2012; Aull-Davies, 2008) and thereby placed a value on personal experience in research (Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2019; Black and Garvis, 2018; Burchard et al. 2018; Barker et al. 2018; Loch and Black, 2011; Lord and Preston, 2009; Cole, 2009; Davies and Gannon, 2006).

The narrative stance allowed us as women to make sense of our gendered experiences in our management roles. Chase (2018) tells us that narrative inquiry is a form of communication or “meaning-making through the shaping of experience” which leaves room for narratives to shape understandings of feelings and emotions, and not just events or actions. Personal narratives permit the asking of ‘new’ and ‘other’ questions, allowing research to follow different avenues and connections and seek out alternative understandings. They allow us to scrutinise the everyday with as much interest as “the epiphanies that shake, test, and change us” (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015, p. 86).

³⁷ Loch and Black, 2011, p. 105

These narratives therefore expose new meanings through the ‘localised’ knowledge or stories of the ‘small’ daily events or ‘quiet moments’ (hooks, 2003) that shaped or continue to shape lived experiences in male-dominated management roles. Kraus (2006, p. 131), adopting the framework of Bourdieu’s social theory, concludes that profound change comes from the action of not the great individual leader, but the many individuals feeding into social movements, such as in the case of the feminist movement. As Reid (2018) concluded of the international women’s movement of the 1970s:

“The approach was one of theorising through autobiography or through storytelling... Women’s stories, insights, and life histories were used to develop new analytical concepts to understand issues around the quality and purpose of women’s lives”.

(Reid, 2018, p. 17)

Black, Crimmins and Henderson (2019) write that their personal and private stories (as female academics resisting the imposition of neo-liberalism) are directly connected to wider socio-political contexts.

“if we are to understand the workings and impact of larger political discourses and structures, then our sharing of stories together matters”.

(Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2019, p. 540)

Etorre (2016) believes that feminist critical writing should commit to the future of women by using personal experience “to teach and guide as a way of charting new theoretical journeys” (Etorre, 2016, p.10). In her ethnographic work she seeks to empower her readers to envision new futures by showing them what they might not have imagined before. I have tried to emulate Etorre by ‘digging deeper’ into the personal to shed new light on the ‘understory’ of what it is like just simply ‘being’ there, a woman in HE management and leadership in Ireland.

8.2.2 Contribution 2 - unravelling the threads of women's gendered experiences

As I teased out and unravelled the story threads in the participant narratives, adopting a poststructuralist, feminist lens of inquiry, I offer the reader a glimpse into the daily realities of lives lived as women in a male-dominated management environment, where we are the perpetual outsider (Kolbenschlag, 1979), the 'other' to the standard or reference point that is the 'male' (de Beauvoir, 2009; Butler, 1999). I contend that these story threads capture very personal and lived experiences of negotiating power through acts of small but strategic resistances (Foucault, 1994; 1980) in the "hyper-masculinist" model of management that prevails in the HEI sector in Ireland (Lynch et al. 2020; O'Connor, Harford and Fitzgerald, 2020; Harford, 2018; Gasparini, 2018; Billing, 2011; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012, p. 137).

They expose the additional pressures placed on women with the adoption of 'new managerialism' (Giroux, 2018; 2010; Peters, 2013) in the public sector in response to the rise of a neo-liberalist political ideology in Anglophone countries (Davies and Bansel, 2013; Davies, Gottsche and Bansel, 2006) and which is now endemic in the HE sector in Ireland (Walsh, 2018; Walsh and Loxley, 2015; Loxley, Seery and Walsh, 2014; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012). The rise of neo-liberalism and new managerialist practices from the 1990s onwards offered a veneer of transparency and "were represented as gender and care neutral" (Lynch, 2020, p. 56). Whilst this transparency resulted in legislation to rectify what Lynch (2020, p. 56) refers to as "grosser forms of gender-based discriminations", the rise of neo-liberalism in fact brought about new, more subtle, exclusionary practices and in fact, served to exacerbate the gendered nature of the academy (Harford, 2018).

These practices have underpinned the exploitation of the feminine ethic of care (Gilligan, 1993; 2011) such that female managers are expected to undertake the 'nurturing' role with staff, the impact of which is "doubly-anchored", to use Baumann's (1986) phrase, in patriarchy as this work is considered 'low status' and does not contribute to a Bourdieusian (1977) capitals accrual process (Gander, 2019) that is necessary for advancement (Lynch et al. 2020; O'Keefe, 2020; Harford, 2018; Lynch, 2010; Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011).

The women speak of the ‘draining’ effect of this expectation to be emotionally supportive – this was forefronted in particular in both Molly’s and Deirdre’s monologues. They also express frustration at the endless low-status administrative tasks that are now endemic in the sector and the imposition of audit technology (see HEA 2014 for systems performance reporting and the framework for annual institutional profiling in Ireland) which is symptomatic of the neo-liberalist university:

“Universities... have become administrative businesses, where staff... feel controlled, compared, harassed, besieged, demoralised and divided by the constant and frantic pace, the ‘taken-for-granted’ overwork...”

(Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2019, p. 540)

Whilst these tasks are also demanded of men in the role, women for the most part also take on the additional ‘caring’ and domestic responsibilities at home which are expected to remain invisible (Lynch et al. 2020; Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012) in the professional sphere. The adoption of this culture leads women to craft “elastic selves” (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011, p. 632) where we “stretch the elastic” of our minds and bodies (Blackmore, 2018) to meet the requirements of the role, one which demands a ‘selflessness’ (Gilligan, 1993) not asked of men, particularly so for women with ‘care’ responsibilities. This conflict between the personal and the professional is one that men, for the most part, do not have to face. The dual role, double shift or ‘second shift’ (Arlie Hochschild, 2016) encompassing the conflicting demands of the domestic and the public sphere is a conflict that continues to face women, and not men, and this featured strongly in the participant narratives. Pilcher and Coffey (1996) observed that feminism has made very little inroads into dismantling the dominant gender ideology of the domestic sphere as the exclusive domain of women. Hochschild (Hochschild, 2016; Hochschild, 1989; Schulte, 2014) referred to it as a ‘stalled revolution’ and has observed that women have been “fast-changing” to keep up with contemporary workplace demands but everything else has been “slow-changing”. Even with the introduction of family-friendly workplace policies, the goalposts

have in fact shifted, and the hours at the office have got longer, albeit perhaps shared, but resulting in even less time for family responsibilities.

In the IoT sector in particular, women are making their way into middle management or Head of Department (SL2 grades), and there is a strong sense of being 'othered' not only from senior management, which is predominantly male (see annual HEA institutional profiles), but also of being isolated and distant from the academic staff, in whom, as Molly observes, a lot of 'power' resides in this highly unionised branch of the sector. The role as it is lived by these women can result therefore in feelings of disempowerment and disconnect.

The neo-liberalist university and the adoption of new-managerialism has also valorised masculinist leadership styles, which are more aggressive and autocratic (Gasparini, 2018; Billing, 2011), such that women who make it to senior level in particular can experience exclusion in the 'chilly climate' of the boardroom. Francis 'retold' her story of her time in that space, and that of a colleague, as being lonely and isolating, where they were made to feel 'outsiders' or not part of the 'boy's club'. With the valorisation of the masculine, women who do make it to management are expected to 'practise' their gender (Butler, 1999) in order to retain their status both as credible managers and as women in the field (Walters, 2011), leading to a sense of role conflict. Molly spoke of feelings of not being in 'alignment' with the job anymore and she felt she had no choice but to leave. It is important to note that this is not an essentialist perspective - there are men in these roles who may also not exhibit these stereotypical male leadership traits, who do not display hegemonical masculinity (Connell, 1977) and who also therefore must face this sense of conflict in their role. April spoke to this in her story. But these are the 'small stories', the lived experiences of a small cohort of women in the role, and the valorisation of the masculine ethic does not serve anyone either aspiring to (as it can serve to put them off) or already, in the job – it is a zero-sum game (Nicholson, 1996) for all.

I will discuss this further in Section 8.34 below as I examine how these findings can feed into the wider discourse (Reid, 2018; hooks, 2003) on combating inequality and exclusion in the sector.

8.2.3 Contribution 3 – women’s way of working and being

The participant narratives display a valuing of collaboration, communication and connectedness in their workplace. Developing relationships with their colleagues is important to them. Their stories speak of upset when relationships become fractured or they struggle to develop and/ or maintain them in the current new-managerialist system, which according to Davies (2005), cited in Black, Crimmins and Henderson (2019, p. 540), is “unable to convey human emotion”.

Stereotypical male leadership is considered to be more assertive, autocratic and directive, while women’s style has traditionally been more participative and democratic (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004), “including nurture, benevolence and personal caring for the individualised concerns of others” (Saint-Michel, 2018, p. 944). To occupy senior or executive positions in particular, Koenig et al. (2011, p. 637) has found that women are expected to be both communal and participative to fulfil their gender role but also agentic to fulfil the stereotypical masculinist leadership role, what can be termed ‘role incongruity’ (Saint-Michel, 2018). And even if women fulfil the former effectively, they can in fact experience dislike and prejudice if they do not specifically fulfil the female communal role. The participant narratives speak to this conflict – the expectation to be ‘motherly’ (Harford, 2018) but also proactive, assertive and task-oriented.

There have been studies in androgynous leadership, a model whereby the leader exhibits both stereotypical masculine and feminine traits (BI Norwegian School of Management, 2018), such that it can lead to innovation in the boardroom and help women overcome the negative effects of sex-stereotyping in the workplace (Korabik, 1990). There are limitations, however, in terms of finding the right balance to cultivate the ideal mix of androgynous

qualities (Velumyan, 2020). The author observed that while the future development of leadership qualities should encompass both mindsets, “(t)he current situation does not align with an ideal picture and unfortunately is spinning in the opposite direction”. Koenig et al. (2011, p. 637) conclude that despite some changes towards more androgynous beliefs about leadership, women will continue to experience prejudice and challenges in their efforts to ascend to leadership because “men fit the cultural construals of leadership better than women do”.

Research undertaken around transformational leadership, where the emphasis is on collaboration, relationship building and motivation, and demands behaviours more associated with the feminine (Eagly, 2003; Fletcher, 2004), has suggested that women continue to experience disadvantage arising from “prejudicial evaluations of their competence in masculine organizational contexts” (Eagly and Carli, 2003, Abstract). Saint-Michel (2018) in a study of leaders and followers in four French organisations concluded that in fact “no-one can eradicate gender stereotypes” and results highlighted “the weight of gendered stereotypes” (Saint-Michel, 2018, paragraph 37). Even though transformational leadership was not considered congruent with the behaviour of the male leaders, they appeared to be given more ‘freedom’ without “the fear of perception bias” in evaluations. And as O’Connor (2014) observed the traditionally-accepted qualities of university leaders would outwardly seem to be characteristics more stereotypically female - consensual, being a good listener, personable – but new-managerialism has in fact exacerbated the need for ‘outcome-driven’ stereotypical leadership and the exhibition of ‘macho skills’ (O’ Connor, 2014, p. 115).

It would seem to suggest that there needs to be a paradigm shift in terms of how leadership is constructed and the value-system underpinning it. According to Gilligan (2011) the female construction of self leads to the valuing of everyday life, and a feminine ethic is one which is fundamentally relational, collaborative and communicative. She proposes the adoption of an ethic which is neither feminine nor masculine but human, one which is not separate or disparate from relationship or emotion. As humans we are “inherently relational, responsive beings” (Gilligan, 2011). More fundamentally, it is an ethic that if viewed through a

democratic rather than patriarchal lens has much to offer, because as humans, we are “hard-wired for cooperation” (Gilligan, 2011).

“It is also crucial to clarify that within a patriarchal framework, the ethics of care is a “feminine” ethic, whereas within a democratic framework it is a human ethic, grounded in democratic values, the importance of everyone having a voice and being listened to carefully and heard with respect”.

(Gilligan, 2011)

Noddings (1986) also argued that feminine ‘caring’ could in fact form the basis of a new morality, or value system, which could be a “sound and lovely alternative foundation for ethical behaviour” (Noddings, 1986, p. 42). For this shift to take place, a value therefore needs to be attached to the accrual of a care ethic as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) for entry to the boardroom (Gander, 2019). This discussion would also then need to be underpinned by one on the value placed on care and nurturing in the domestic or private sphere (as above, Section 8.3.2). The invisibility of care responsibilities in the workplace and the continuing pay crisis in the childcare sector in Ireland (Siptu, 2021), are both indicative of the persistent low status afforded to the care of children in society in general however.

Paradigm shifts take time however and it is clear that for women to make their way into management and leadership in HE in a durable and sustainable manner, this would best be served in the short to medium term by the development of institutional structural supports in HE. Harford (2018) emphasises the importance of “validation, selection and networks of support” for female academics to counter gender inequity and institutional barriers to advancement. Nurturing, head-hunting and encouragement to apply for vacancies at senior level have all been recognised in the literature as being key to “legitimizing women’s occupancy of positions of power” (Harford, 2018), as women often lack the confidence to promote themselves, as came to the fore in some of the participant narratives, Deirdre’s in particular. Creating the opportunities for networking, in both a formal and an informal capacity, can also help to develop confidence and foster positive self-esteem and career ambition within the sector. Mentoring has been found to improve job-related self-efficacy

and well-being (Dutta et al. 2011) but inadequate mentoring can actually compromise job satisfaction and negatively impact on career development (Cross et al. 2019). Enablers of valuable mentoring included availability of suitable and invested mentors, with the relevant theoretical knowledge and practical expertise, which also included expertise in the related areas of academic guidance, professional decision-making and access to professional networks. Supportive relationship was also cited as being important – and Deirdre spoke to this in her narrative – and a degree of what the authors referred to as ‘mutuality’ or rapport. While some female mentees in this study reported having no gender preference in mentors, others wanted female mentors and more particularly, the preference was for mentors “at different stages of life and career who could provide advice on finding a healthy work life balance” (Cross et al., 2019, p. 6 of 11). Chitsamatanga, Rembe and Shumba (2018) also observed that mentoring may not be as effective as it could be “due to organisational male supremacy that continues to steer precincts in the participation of females thus affecting the creation and progression of information in universities”.

Two such structural supports that have been put in place in recent years in HEI’s in Ireland are Athena Swan (Advance HE UK & HEA) and SALI (Senior Academic Leadership Initiative, HEA). The HEA adopted the Athena Swan charter in 2015. The charter is an internationally recognised framework designed to increase equality and diversity in HE by promoting and supporting women’s careers in HE and engagement with the charter is a required of all HEI’s in Ireland such that future research funding is determined by the successful attainment of category of awards within specified time frames (including significant funding from Science Foundation Ireland, the Irish Research Council and Health Research Board). It is therefore imperative that the HEI’s fully engage. However, research has shown that while the link to research funding has driven its successful implementation, there are imitations in terms of what it can achieve “without institutional and societal change” (Ovseiko et al., 2017, Abstract). Some of its unintended consequences noted in this study included limited ability to address the twin issues of power and pay imbalances, low expectations of the sustainability of the changes, and resentments about perceived positive discrimination. Rosser et al. (2019) in a comparison of Athena Swan in the UK and a similar concept in the

US (Advance) found that there were institutional differences in the levels of understanding of how gender equality could be achieved and whether the respective initiatives were trying to

“radically alter societal gender dynamics to be fairer, or to support women in decisions that reproduce gender inequalities and stereotypes.... Projects that embarked on multi-level system approaches have had the most enduring impact, as opposed to those that took a so-called ‘change the women’ approach”.

(Rosser et al., 2019, p. 6)

The SALI initiative was launched in 2019 by the Minister of Further and Higher Education, with the aim of improving the gender balance at the senior level in HE in Ireland. The initiative emerged from the 2018 Gender Equality Taskforce Action Plan (HEA, 2018) with the prediction that, with no intervention, it could take up to 20 years to achieve an average of 40% of women at professorial level in the university sector. By November 2021, up to 30 such positions have been created in the university sector in Ireland, with another 15 to be appointed by end 2022. Criteria for the funding of such posts include the identification of a clear and significant gender under-representation and where the impact of such an appointment would achieve “accelerated and sustainable change within an institution” (www.heai.ie). While it is too early to assess the value of such appointments, both Gasparini (2018) and Arnold and Loughlin (2019) consider that a symbolic achievement of a critical mass of women in leadership roles may be a first step in changing the stereotype of what leadership entails.

Structural and institutional supports such as Athena Swan, SALI and effective networking and mentoring opportunities all have the potential to make a difference by providing pathways to leadership. However, sustained transformation of the sector will only come about when there is a change in how women are perceived and valued for what they can bring to the role, and when the incongruence (Billing, 2011) between stereotypical

leadership and women is breached³⁸. I contend that the way forward might involve the valuing of ‘care’ and the recognition of the value of an ‘ethic of care’ in democratic HE organisations, such that the academic field is no longer characterised by a masculine habitus (Lynch et al., 2020, p. 169), but by one that could simply be termed a ‘human’ (Gilligan, 2011) habitus.

8.3 Reflexive Research and avoiding ‘distortion’

“Through personal accounting, researchers must become more aware of how their own positions and interests are imposed at all stages of the research process - from the questions they ask to those they ignore, from who they study to who they ignore, from problem formation and analysis, representation, and writing - in order to produce less distorted accounts of the social world.”

(Hertz, 1997, p.viii)

Alvesson (2010, p. 106) suggests that it is incumbent upon researchers to clearly articulate their theoretical positions so that the reader is fully aware of the lens through which events are being viewed and hence I invested heavily (Chapters 2 and 3) in an examination of the philosophical and theoretical frameworks underpinning this literary arts-based narrative inquiry. It is also one of the “ideals’ of reflexivity (Alvesson, 2010, p. 107) that I come to understand and articulate my own place in this research story (Hertz, 1997, p.viii). While I share some of the characteristics of what Byrne (2000) refers to as the ‘collective identity’ of the participants, as the researcher and as a consequence, an active participant in the co-constitution of the research (Finlay, 2003, p. 5), I drew on my personal social and cultural

³⁸ This position is not intended as essentialist – stereotypical leadership is incongruent with non hegemonic masculinities and those who identify with other (gender non-gender) titles (Black, Crimmins and Henderson, 2019, p. 539) who do not conform to the norm. But in this research which was undertaken in the mid – 2010s, there was little data available in the area of intersectionality to include issues of race, class and gender identity in leadership in HE in Ireland. The Athena Swan Charter for example has only been reviewed in 2021 with the addition of new principles ensuring equality and diversity targets to include those around gender identity for example (effective from 30th June 2021). Similarly the HEA (2021) has only recently began collating data on race and ethnicity across the sector. There is no doubt that future studies in this space will use a broader lens to encompass this new and critical diversity in contemporary society and the workplace.

biography to find my way into this research story (Chapter 1), establishing my ‘credentials’ as it were by justifying my status as an ‘insider’ (a co-participant as a fellow female Head of Department; a co-creator as a narrative inquirer) but also establishing myself as an ‘outsider’ in this research by virtue of simply being the researcher (Rasavi, in Bridges, 2001, p. 372). As Alvesson (2010, p. 106) notes however, irrespective of the exact position taken on reflexivity and how best to do it, there is clearly in the qualitative paradigm always the possibility that the ‘researcher-self’ will become just too central, too ‘big’ for the story that might best be told.

To avoid a preoccupation with the ‘researcher-self’ (and it was my preference to do so), De Mello (2007) holds that epistemologies of personal and lived experience and working with narrative in particular should seek to produce reflective and *personally-transformative* research. In particular, Barone and Eisner (2012) hold that the intersubjective nature of arts-based research can allow for deep reflection and personal transformation as it involves ‘*a looking inward*’ as one’s own *audience* before looking outward to new audiences. Some researchers highlight the self-emancipatory potential of engaging in arts-based research – it can offer a form of catharsis and self-empowerment, an opportunity to become awake to the self (Denzin, 2014, 2013, 2006; Barone & Eisner, 2012; De Mello, 2007; Saldana, 1998, 2008; Leitch, 2003; Spry, 2001, 2006). In ‘*Second Chair*’ Saldana (2008, p. 189) discusses the personal catharsis that occurred for him when he was performing his own story – he tells us that the emotional recall “led him to tears”.

In the many iterations of this thesis write-up process, I was never looking to specifically articulate my own transformation or draw attention to personal cathartic moments. While being open to learning and seeing my own lived experiences in a new light, that learning was always going to be embedded in the *many shared* stories that were co-constructed with my co-participants and did not emerge for me in the form of “cleansing accounts” (Lee and Hassard, cited in Alvesson, 2010) of my own personal experiences, pre-occupations or specific positions. Moreover, I did not set out to tell ‘big’ headline grabbing stories of my co-participants’ experiences or to burrow down into the confessional or self-revelatory stories of the researcher-self. I simply wanted to tell the ‘understory’, the smaller story

(Kim, 2016) for the reader by creating narrative co-constructions of the lived realities of professional women in a male-dominated HE environment, of which I am one.

Clandinin and Connolly (2000) on the positioning of the researcher within a narrative inquiry highlight the opportunity to explore our own experiences in relation to the participants' experiences. Both the personal and professional research agenda of the researcher can dictate the research direction. In particular, the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the researcher and researched in narrative inquiry is that very interconnectedness between the personal agenda of the researcher with that of the researched. Reflexivity within a narrative inquiry could perhaps then be viewed as the capacity to simply reflect on our own role in generating new knowledge (Ali et al., 2004, p. 25) through co-construction. This is the approach to personal reflexivity that I have taken in this narrative inquiry, one which comes from the ontological position I have adopted which values personal knowledge and lived experiences, those of both the researcher and the researched, "as meaningful and worthy of exploration" (Byrne, 2004, p.182).

8.4 An Ethical Inquiry

As a doctoral research student, the principles of confidentiality, informed consent and beneficence (Farrimond, 2013; Josellson, 2007, p. 537) are deeply ingrained and the consequences of transgression so severe that the fear and anxiety of doing so are almost debilitating. All three are of equal importance, but in qualitative inquiry, and working with narrative in particular, I think the first and last of these are critically important due to the nature of the data (lived, real, localised), the smaller numbers of research participants, and in this case, the relative "smallness" of the HE community in Ireland. The biggest danger was transgression on my own behalf as I am identifiable (though I have authored this thesis in my maiden name, which is not the name I use in my professional environment). As a literary arts-based narrative inquiry, fictionalisation (Kim, 2016; Caine et al., 2017) and creative writing techniques allowed me to change and disguise participant identities,

locations and any other 'players' and 'actors' within the non-fiction stories that I created. Like Egeli (2017) I really tried to be very judicious in the stories and episodes that I presented whilst remaining faithful to the experiences of the participants and the interviews as data (achieved specifically via the use of verbatim speech). The poetic monologue was a particularly good format for 'cleaning' the data and the ethnographic playscript likewise, as the use of a composite character in the dramatisation prevents any one individual or event/series of events from being identifiable.

However, Traianou (2014) cautions that it is impossible to ensure that identities would not be recognisable to some and all we can do as researchers is our very best to try to pre-empt that eventuality by masking as much as possible the people, places and events that populate the research representations. As an arts-based researcher, I was not seeking to tell the 'facts' of a life as recounted to me by any one of the participants, but rather I was looking to leave an 'impression' (Adams, Holman-Jones and Ellis, 2015) of 'life-as-lived' as a woman in HE management and leadership in Ireland gleaned from the many stories that have been told and from which the reader might gain new knowledge and insight. The artifice that can be achieved by using creative-writing techniques to mask and disguise should not take away from that impressionistic rendering of the participant stories and experiences but should go a long way towards ensuring confidentiality and beneficence.

Both Duncan and Watson (2010) and Aull-Davis (1998) pay some attention to the principle of informed consent and consider it to be a facet of ethical research that is far more complex than is often anticipated. Informed consent as part of social inquiry "assumes moral standards such as truthfulness, openness, confidentiality and fidelity on the part of the researcher" (Duncan and Watson, 2010, p. 54). The authors hold that it should be treated as a process rather than a once-off event primarily because the course and consequences of research cannot be predicted to any great extent at the outset. Research is organic by its very nature and when researching in the human sphere, it is unpredictable (Ozkanh and White, 2008) and 'messy' (Denzin, 1997). Aull-Davis (1998) notes that

“with the more open research designs characteristic of ethnographic methods, researchers do not know at the outset what are all the pertinent aspects; in fact, the theoretical focus may shift and different sorts of data become relevant as the research proceeds”.

(Aull-Davis, 1998, p. 55)

As such, while participants do not need to be consulted on the details of changing theoretical or philosophical perspectives for example, Aull Davis (1998) contends that at the very least they should be informed that research is a process of discovery and that might mean that the direction the research takes and the consequences of that research may only become clear as the research progresses. In my own case, the participant information sheet and informed consent stated the research objective of the creation of a playscript for performance as part of the dissemination process. I did err on the side of caution as there was some uncertainty about a public performance and as such, I was careful to state that the outcome may involve further consultation and a public performance. The research was originally conceived as a performance-based research project but due to the constraints of the assessment process in the Structured Phd programme in Education, the possibility of performance as part of the research itself was not realised, and this only became clear in the latter stages.

Spivak wonders whether from a poststructuralist perspective if *all* work is “parasitical and slightly to the side” (Landry and Maclean, 1996, p. 232) of what one set out to investigate, so that *misfits in the text can actually signal the path to follow* (italics are mine). The “moments of transgression” can therefore direct the investigation, rather than upset it. Similarly I think that in social inquiry, these transgressions or deviations can serve to make the research richer and more meaningful, for both the researcher and the researched. Connolly and Clandinin (1990, p. 7) suggest that narrative researchers “be prepared to follow their nose and after the fact, construct their narrative of inquiry”. While the unrealised ambition for a public performance during the life of the research was a disappointment to me, the feedback that I have received from the participants about the short stories, poetic monologues and the script, which I will proceed to perform as part of the dissemination process, has been very affirmative for me. Josellson (2007, p. 538) talks

about the fact that ethics in narrative research is “not a matter of abstractly correct behaviour but of responsibility in human relationship”. The well-established relationships that were at the very heart of this narrative inquiry for the most part were in fact both the problem and the solution when it came to the process of renegotiation. Because of those established relationships, my fear was rooted in an ever-present anxiety that my writing would not be good enough and that I would lose face and professional credibility in front of my peers. Moreover, they might not see it as worthy of their personal investment as participants, or that the representations I created were not in fact representative of their experiences. However, the very strength of the relationships between us was to be a strength in this regard because we used the opportunity to engage once more and discuss the ideas we had touched on during the research interviews and if and how things had changed for them since. I also took the opportunity to clarify that the playscript was reflective of women’s experiences of management and leadership in the IoT sector and I was not claiming it as a universal ‘truth’ or to be representative of experiences in the wider sector, or representative of any individual experience.

Josellson (2007, p. 538) states that the real ethical conundrum in narrative research derives from the dual role that we must occupy as we are in an intimate relationship with the participants to a much greater extent than is usual even within the broader qualitative research paradigm, whilst also striving to maintain professional responsibility to, and academic integrity within, the scholarly community. The research relationship demands honesty, integrity and respect for the participants and their contributions whilst academic integrity demands an honesty and integrity towards the research community such that the knowledge produced is an authentic and justifiable interpretation. I have endeavoured to succeed in both, but I am heartened by the words of Janet Malcolm on the ethics of journalism, cited by Josellson (2007, p. 539) in which she observes that the wisest of us know that the best we can do is not good enough. Kim (2016, p. 300) also intones that as narrative inquirers, we are all “perpetual beginners” who “dare to engage in narrative inquiry to develop bridges that will connect us with other human beings. More than anything, narrative inquiry is about what it means to be human. It is a journey of becoming”.

8.5 Conclusion - 'It could always have been otherwise'

O' Neill (2000, p. 105) states that as a feminist and working-class woman, she has learned to declare her bias and her way of working in a research environment, and that her research says as much about herself and her social perspective as it does about the strength of feeling "about equality and inequality within the research process". As a reflexive and ethically-responsible researcher (see Chapter 7, Section 7.22), I have been personally and emotionally invested in this research from the outset. However, to avoid the pitfalls of self-absorption, Alvesson suggests that we balance the "ideals" of reflexivity with the duty to deliver knowledge and this balance can be achieved by remaining aware (Alvesson, 2010, p. 107), and I would add transparent, about the fact that there is always more than one good way to tell a story and that the one chosen may in fact obscure other equally valid and alternative understandings - there could be "several possible interpretations" (Alvesson, 2010, p.108) and many alternative ways to connect the threads of a research story:

"An absence of any clear and conclusive evidence that this is the best way to understand something does not mean that good results have not been produced. Often there are reasons for seeing the world in more than one way".

(Alvesson, 2010, p. 108)

Knowledge production is complicated by many factors including the processes of mediation - our reflection on, and understanding of, our own reality (Van Niekerk & Savin-Baden, 2010.). The postmodernist shift from truth to 'truths' was an ontological move from positivism to interpretivism and 'truths' are, as a consequence, 'fragile' things (p.28), subject as they are to mediation through and by our own biographies and subjectivities. Given the particular philosophical, theoretical and methodological stance that I have adopted, emerging from my own narrative beginnings into this inquiry, this is the story that I sought to put before you the reader, as a plausible interpretation, but to paraphrase Clandinin (2018), it could always have been otherwise. As Finlay (2003, p. 2) notes, "as meanings are negotiated within particular social contexts... another researcher (would) unfold a different story".

Equally, to try to capture and express the full human story, the 'life as lived' for each of the participants - in its entirety and its fullness and its depth - would have been an impossible task. As discussed in Chapter 4, I am drawn to the notion that a totalised, absolute view of the world is impossible (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Aligning with the postmodern, poststructural lens of inquiry that I employed, from the outset I have held that this account is not authoritative - it is partial, and even perhaps partisan (Finlay, 2003, p. 7) - but I have made a consistent and conscious effort (Alvesson, 2010, p. 106) to ensure that it is not, as Hertz (1997) puts it, distorted. It is one possible and I contend, plausible, interpretation or story that is "fundamentally anchored in the social context' in which I and the research participants are embedded – the male-dominated world of management and leadership in higher education in Ireland, specifically an IoT, spanning a period when that landscape was fundamentally changed by the imposition of 'new managerialism' (Lynch, Grummell and Devine, 2012) throughout the public service.

I have tried to remain open to the multiplicity, the complexity and the 'messiness' of researching the human being, which according to Frosh (Frosh, 2007, in Brinkmann, 2018, p. 581) is never in itself a complete "whole". As such, the story can never be completed or brought to a conclusion, as the human being is always in progress. While I have immersed myself in the uncertainty and ambiguity (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2010) of a research paradigm that eschews arriving at a singular 'truth' or understanding, in an effort to locate my research somewhere in between the more acceptable academic 'readerly' tradition and my aspirational 'writerly' ambitions (Trinh, in Fusco, 2008), I established a narrative inquiry framework that has allowed me to impose a coherence to better shape the stories that have been told and thereby offer the reader an 'interpretation' of these stories.

I have, therefore, through literary arts-based representations merely presented one of many possible interpretations. It is one in which I have portrayed these women, myself included, as neither victims nor heroines (Wallace et al., 2014, p. 454), neither weak nor strong, but simply women aspiring to and achieving in roles that were not written for us (Butler, 1999; de Beauvoir, 2009), resisting where we can the demands of the hegemonical male power structures (Foucault, 1994; 1980) that are endemic in management and

leadership in HE in Ireland, in an effort to retain our status as both women and managers, as carers (Devine, Grummell and Lynch, 2011) who 'care' (Noddings, 1986), though sometimes at a heavy personal cost (de Beauvoir, 2009).

Barone and Eisner (2012) describe how arts-based research can have what they refer to as referential adequacy - in other words, the research story 'rings' true or 'holds water', and as a consequence can be said to be credible. I have presented the small stories (Kim, 2016) of the daily lived realities of women in academic management roles in HE in Ireland, and specifically in the IoT sector, roles that traditionally were written for, and occupied by, men. I contend that the interpretation that I have offered through these stories, the impression of 'life as lived' that I wish to leave with the reader, 'rings' true and 'holds water' primarily because there is that sense of the 'real' and believable about it. While it is only one interpretation, and it could always have been otherwise (Clandinin, 2018), according to Barone and Eisner (2012), this is a form of research validity (referential adequacy) that can imply the emergent meanings are, in fact, generaliseable, even though they are the stories of a few.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Inclusion 'Being There', a rehearsed reading of an ethnodrama

Appendix 2

Devising an Ethnodrama

Making a start -workshopping ideas

"The conundrum for an ethnodramatist is to balance the authentic with the artistic".

(Saldana 2011, p. 40)

Writing a drama was a new departure for me and was therefore something I needed to prepare myself for. I undertook two workshops to that end in the academic year 2016/2017 - one with Fishamble Theatre Company (MIC) and a second with Rib Davis (MIC, 09/12/17). Both focused on writing for the theatre; the first on playwrighting in a more conventional sense as we explored working with poetic and narrative outlines to create dialogue and short scenes, while the second was focused on the move from 'transcript to script' and the use of oral history in theatre.

From the Fishamble workshop, I learnt the value of not just reading good playscripts as exemplars of how to write well, but the importance of reading aloud to better attune my ear to the sound of speech in dramatic form. As an amateur actress and producer, I practice both regularly. Rib Davis (www.ribdavis.com) is a playwright and author, an oral historian and community arts activist. His rationale for using oral history in the theatre includes the value of both authenticity of content and authenticity of expression to the stage. It also provides a unique opportunity to give a public voice to research participants and even moreso, it gives a public voice to those whom the participants represent more widely. Davis presented the variety of forms available to the playwright, ranging from oral history as

simply a background to fictional scripting through to strict documentary or verbatim theatre where dialogue comes from the transcript with as few alterations as possible (Cantrell, 2013). He also discussed examples of the many hybrids in between. His criteria for the particular form that would be finally selected included the aptitude of the writer and his/her intentions for the project, as well as staging limitations such as the venue, with an overarching need to be realistic about what is achievable.

Being realistic was going to be very important for me. I could identify myself as a novice writer, with a desire to dramatise the data I had collected from my research interviews with the participants. The script was to be developed as part of my dissertation write-up with a view to dissemination via solo performance (either in part or whole) at conferences and seminars. It would need therefore to be simply staged in terms of props and lighting but could draw readily upon technology (audio-visual, multi-media) to add to the audience experience and to support the staging. I also wanted to build in the capacity for the script to be 'up-cycled' with directions for more enhanced staging if the opportunity arose.

'An Ensemble of Ideas'

Even though the staging of a theatrical performance was no longer a realisable objective within the life of the research project, during these improvisation or workshop sessions we borrowed from the notion of an 'ensemble of ideas' (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007) in theatre devising to generate ideas. Theatre devising emerged from the 'avant-garde' movement in the mid-1980s as an alternative form of theatre-making to conventional, text-led and author-driven approaches, or what could perhaps be termed more 'readerly' (Fusco, 2008) forms of theatre-making. By the 1990s, theatre devising had become more conventional and is widely understood now as a form of theatre-making which is achieved without a script to work from before the actual creation of the work itself (Heddon and Milling, 2006). In devised theatre, the process, how the idea comes into being and the innumerable moves that are made to bring this idea to fruition, is as important as

the product. While there is no 'blueprint', no specific route from process to product (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007) - the piece can start from anything and the process can take it anywhere - the starting point would tend to be the exploration of ideas and motivations emerging from diverse stimuli such as a painting or lines from a song or poem, to name but a few. For me, the starting point or 'idea' for the final product was embedded in my research intention – 'thinking theatrically' with the creation of an ethnodrama emerging from the participant interviews gathered as 'data' during the research process.

In preparation for the first session, on the advice of Dr. McDonagh and building on the learning from the earlier workshops that I had completed, I returned to the participant narratives and the original recordings and transcriptions and extracted dialogue, images and story-threads that resonated strongly with me. Rib Davis suggested making notes on the source material which helps to establish a list of scenes. This links the scenes directly to the sources. He also suggested that this can help to ensure that no one scene or vignette focuses too much on one topic or theme and it encourages the writer to work in miscellany. I proceeded to collate these extracts, loosely categorising them in such a way that a 'shape' began to emerge for the script. I had endeavoured to pick out images and phrases (and had highlighted these) in the speech selections which could perhaps act as stimuli (Govan, Nicholson and Normington, 2007) for movement and action and which could possibly provide dramatic structure. I have presented an earlier draft segment of this table in Chapter 4 (Table 4.2) as I was simultaneously working on the process of 'storying' the participant narratives (Kim, 2016) and creating the script.

The full table used in the devising process is given below.

Table Excerpts from Participant Interviews for Scripting (post workshopping)

Column 1 - Working through the field texts (recordings, transcripts, hand-notes), I collated and catalogued ‘triggers’ or ‘flash-point’ recollections that resonated with me or rubbed up against my own stories (See Chapter 9).

Column 2 - These were later loosely interpreted through a feminist lens of ‘otherness’, ‘power’ and ‘care and caring’ (See Chapter 8).

Column 3 - Emerging from the workshop sessions were images or stimuli/ideas to help inform the writing process.

Excerpts from interview texts (numbers identify the interviewee/ recording to the researcher; text in bold specifically resonates with me and corroborates my own experiences or prompts me to remember a different experience to the interviewee).	Feminist Lens 4. Otherness 5. Power 6. Care & Caring	Images, Ideas for Script
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<p>Box 1 - Becoming I never wanted to be a Head as such (1)</p> <p>I didn't actually have the qualifications; I had the academic qualifications, but I didn't have the experience. (6)</p> <p>I hadn't anticipated that I would get the role because I felt there were a number of (hesitates) shortcomings in my application.... (3). I never held a management position... I was never trained to be a manager.</p> <p>When I went for the interview for this job, I really didn't expect that I was going to get it. I felt that I wasn't really ... ready for the job? I am still working on that. My</p>	<p>Female as 'lack' / 'deficit' / 'negative co-efficient' to the male (1)</p> <p>Hesitation/ doubt – lack of public voice for women, lack of self-confidence (1)</p>	<p>Women's speech as 'tittle/tattle', unimportant</p>
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<p>knowledge and my competence and my confidence has improved a lot over the years. (3)</p> <p>I never had any interest in it. I actually felt guilty because there wasn't any headship at the time... I sat down for a coffee with my boss.... I wasn't guilting into it but I suppose I do tend to feel guilty about things that happen...</p> <p>But maybe I was testing myself... could I do that? Maybe there was a bit of me that wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. (4) Ego. Hard to accept now that is why I did it.</p> <p>I thought I could help shape things (0)</p> <p>I wanted to be taken seriously (0), have a voice at the top table.</p> <p>I had no aspirations (to be a Head). (6) I think I just fell into it. (5)</p> <p>For me it was personal. I needed the flexibility for the kids (6). The flexibility and the money. (4)</p> <p>Myself and my husband changed careers after our first child (2) I took a major pay-cut, sacrificed for the family time.</p>	<p>Feeling guilty, responsible for everything. Female imperative to care (3). Not living up to expectations of patriarchal system (1).</p> <p>Desire to 'lean in', go for position of power. Women not socialised into seeking power (2).</p> <p>Measuring up to the 'male' standard, being moulded by others instead of the one doing the moulding (1).</p> <p>Private vs Public Voice. Public (male sphere) voice is the one that count (1).</p> <p>Not ambitious (2) for power.</p> <p>Commitment to family, care (3). Socialised into this behaviour</p> <p>Unequal burden of 'care.' Irish Constitution – enshrined in the national psyche. Female sacrifices herself for family (3).</p>	<p>Heroine, on a quest, 'Into the Woods' – the unfamiliar.</p> <p>Shaping and moulding.</p> <p>Falling into the unknown</p> <p>Imagery of shaping and moulding, being flexible in the service of others.</p>
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<p>I have to change (jobs) ... I have to justify... it has to make sense... To justify being away from my kids 5 days a week. (2)</p> <p>I get bored and move on – every seven years or so.... If I had stayed with teaching, I would have been bored. I needed a new challenge. (1)</p> <p>Head of Department is family friendly in the broadest possible sense. Time is flexible... if boundaries are well established it's up to women to set those boundaries. (1)</p> <p>It's an acting role, I thought, what can I lose? (4) Only my mind.</p>	<p>Private domestic sphere – pulling me away from public domain (3).</p> <p>Acting against gender norms to have ambition for power (1, 2)</p> <p>But who sets boundaries? (2)</p> <p>Women's embodiment – Victorian era - womb associated with 'hysteria' – lunatic asylum if did not conform (1).</p>	<p>Heroine – On a quest. 'Into the woods', straying from the path.</p> <p>Shaping, being shaped.</p>
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<p>Box 2 Early days... I found it initially quite isolated... and strange. Because I had been in an office with a group of people and suddenly... I was sitting on my own and it was so quiet. (6) And people only came to the office when they had a problem.</p> <p>I couldn't be in the office with my group, my normal (social) group. (6)</p> <p>I wanted to stay in the office but they told me I couldn't (6).</p>	<p>Isolation from previous social group (as well as isolation from male peers in management). Loneliness. Set apart. 'Otherness' (1)</p> <p>Holders of power, gatekeepers, enforcing a code of isolation. Controlling (2).</p>	<p>Rapunzel in the Tower, Sleeping Beauty, locked away</p> <p>Keys to the Kingdom.</p>
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<p>But I met somebody and I said ‘how are you?’ and she said ‘Oh I can’t talk to you now because you’re management. I can’t tell you what the problem is.’ (6)</p> <p>Suddenly there was a ‘them and us’, (6) because you’re management now we can’t talk to you.</p> <p>I rang a colleague from my lecturing days. What am I supposed to be doing? He said– ‘Sit back, don’t worry, they’ll come knocking when they want something. (0) You are there to serve their needs.’</p> <p>What a way to start because... it was clear they could shape me and mould me as they saw fit. (0)</p> <p>I was given no training.... What do I do if someone comes in with a complaint? Nothing, it was just purely left up to my gut reaction. (6)</p> <p>On that very first day, I said to my boss... What am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to be? She said,- see how it goes (0, 6).</p> <p>I thought there would actually be training... I thought someone would explain to you (5).</p> <p>It was straight in. There was no honeymoon.</p> <p>Doubts. Will I be able to fight for them? Will I be able to represent them? Will I be able to talk the talk ... when I need to talk it? (2)</p>	<p>Creating a ‘them and us’ separation, being kept apart (1, 2).</p> <p>Women socialised into serving the needs of others. Not agentic, autonomous being. (1, 2))</p> <p>According to patriarchal norms (1)</p> <p>No path to leadership – no training. No one to learn from. Entering a male world not designed for them. (1, 2)</p> <p>What are the expectations of a honeymoon? (1)</p> <p>Female self-doubt (1)</p>	<p>Separate spheres, never meeting</p> <p>Being shaped and moulded, pulled by others</p> <p>No ‘script’ exists for women in this world</p> <p>Honeymoon bouquet, <i>Happy Ever After</i></p> <p>Note repetition – how might this be used? Chorus</p>
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<p>So I started reading up on it... educated myself really. (2) It didn't take that long... I started to talk to people... there wasn't really an issue. It just started to dissolve.</p> <p>Well, I suppose I was very unsure in the beginning because I wasn't from (the) background and I was Head.</p> <p>So I went to the first meeting and... I remember my boss coming in and saying "Can you handle the first meeting? Everyone, this is XXX. I'm going." I said, "OK. As you all know I don't know the first thing about (this) and I'm relying on all of you to teach me everything you know: and they all said "we will, don't worry ..."" (6)</p> <p>I had been 'parachuted' in. (4)</p> <p>There was resentment in the organisation.... Resentment dissipated over time as I started to talk to people. I established good working relations with people.</p>	<p>Agency. Taking control. Resisting. Educating the self (1, 2)</p> <p>Female style – communication with others</p> <p>Women unsure, doubting themselves (1).</p> <p>No path to leadership.</p> <p>Almost submissive, deferring (1).</p> <p>Catapulting women in for own agendas. 'Glass Cliff'. Where the situation is already very difficult. (2)</p> <p>Taking control, agency. Talking with people. Using female skills of communication etc. Women's way of working. Not playing by their rules. (1, 2)</p>	<p>Being 'thrown to the wolves'.</p> <p>Being thrown in at the deep end, the impossible mission.</p>
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Box 3
I heard whisperings in the corridor and at coffee (0)

(possible audio recordings, whisperings, male and female voices - could be a chorus repeated at intervals, ref: Schaeffer's 'Amadeus').

"They'd give anyone that job these days," (0)
"Who does she think she is? She is only in the door. (0)
"Who is she to manage me?" (1) (use a male voice)
'Is she going to be bossing me? (1) (use a male voice)
"She doesn't have the qualifications in that area, everyone knows that" (0)
"We can't talk to you now because you're management." (6)
"Is there integrity to giving her the position?
Will she be able to represent us, fight for us, promote us?
Because she is not part of us" (2)

'There wasn't even a reputation preceding me' (2)

<p>Box 4 Trying to keep everyone happy and Grand Central Station</p> <p>I spend a lot of time fixing things... people might see that as a criticism of what went on before...(5) , but I'm looking for the solution.</p> <p>Just trying to keep everyone happy. (5)</p> <p>When people fallout and colleagues fall out with each other.</p> <p>That creates terrible unhappiness and creates a lot of tension and stress in the Department.... It can fester and fester.</p> <p>You can't underestimate people's capacity to be hurt by things... their professional identity is wrapped up... they can hurt easily. (0)</p> <p>There's a constant draw on you – a constant sucking of your energy. You're constantly looking after the needs of others, always looking</p>	<p>'Emotional' work of the organisation, 'care ethic' (3)</p> <p>'Caring', minding, 'emotional, messy' work (3) Empathy (3), Pleasing others (1)</p> <p>Women expected to have the skill set to keep them together (3)</p> <p>Awareness of the affective domain. (3)</p> <p>Wanting to keep everyone happy. (3)</p>	<p>'Fixing and mending'</p> <p>Female sphere, stitching and weaving. Weaving story threads together.</p> <p>Unravelling, unwinding</p> <p>Tension, tautness</p>
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<p>after the needs of others... People are never satisfied, never happy. One or two people seem to be happy occasionally but they sometimes aren't happy but a lot of people aren't happy. (3)</p> <p>It's not thanks you are looking for, it's a reciprocal energy... just a little bit of give back. (0). Constantly trying to keep everyone happy...</p> <p>I seem to be running like a lunatic most days... You feel paranoid in this job. Even if you are doing a good one. (5)</p> <p>And the days are long... and I still can't get everything done. (5)</p> <p>There are so many things to do all at once, but I can't do them all at once. (3)</p> <p>Sometimes it feels like Grand Central Station. Everything comes through me. No-one takes responsibility for anything and everything lands on this desk (0).</p> <p>It's like feeding a machine.</p> <p>People email at the most extraordinary times. And copy these emails to my line manager and maybe even his line manager. (5)</p> <p>... I would have welcomed the person coming to talk to me first about it. (0)</p> <p>I was out of the office, for some time off. To stay in a place with no mobile service, no wi-fi. I spent most of the time in the car driving to get mobile service so I could answer phone queries. (5)</p>	<p>Women seeking approval. Wanting to be liked, to be nice. (1) Gendered behaviour.</p> <p>Why not thanks? Don't we deserve it?</p> <p>Women as lunatics – if do not conform or act outside male norms, to the asylum (1, 2).</p> <p>Shouldering the burden of the work, to make up for 'otherness' (1).</p> <p>Unreasonable expectations.</p> <p>Burdensome workload, on demand at all times, no 'personal' time or space, it's not a human being in the role (1).</p> <p>Being undermined, bypassed, disempowered (2)</p> <p>Female sense of duty, unreasonable demands, no personal time (1).</p>	<p>Pulling on strings, being pulled in different directions, like a puppet</p> <p>Rapunzel in the Tower, locked away.</p> <p>Cinderella in the hearth and the ashes – always working.</p> <p>Lines from prose poem by Elizabeth Smart. 'By Grand Central Station'</p> <p>Being 'pulled', 'stretched personally and professionally'</p> <p>Unreasonable workload, Cinderella working till midnight.</p>
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<p>What is it about the role that people think that it's not a human being in the role? That we don't need space or time out? (0)</p> <p>Why is it that academic staff don't see Heads as human?</p> <p>I managed a big project... I didn't get one single compliment about it being good, bad or indifferent.... No-one turned to me and said "That was a great job, well done." (2)</p> <p>... some of the staff prefer to ask forgiveness rather than seek permission. (5) Staff running with their own agenda and you're picking up the pieces afterwards. I've spent a lot of time mending bridges for them that they do not even know they have crashed.</p> <p>I think (admin) staff in the college perceive lecturing staff to have the bread, butter and jam, which in some respects I suppose they have...</p> <p>yet other people work equally hard... seen as the sloggers... not being equal at all. (3) Admin staff would have the view that there is too much given to lecturing staff... there's me in the middle trying to act as arbitrator. (3)</p>	<p>Why are we seeking approval? Why do we care? Wanting to be liked (1)</p> <p>Being undermined, disempowered (2).</p> <p>Peacemaker, women's way of working, interpersonal, messy and emotional work (3)</p>	<p>Different. Not 'like them'. Not human.</p> <p>Broken mirror, shards of glass – Gerda The Snow Queen, fixing and mending</p> <p>Mad-Hatters Tea Party, Little Miss Muffet, Goldilocks</p> <p>Building Bridges</p>
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<p>Box 5 If you're a manager...</p> <p>then it's how bad are you? There isn't a perspective on 'good'.</p>	<p>Binary – good v bad (1).</p> <p>Women supposed to be 'good', socially conditioned (1)</p>	<p>'There was a little girl, she had a little curl...'</p>
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<p>It's relative, how bad we are... rather than relative how good we are. (2)</p> <p>My feeling when I stepped into Head job was...</p> <p>.. that a lot of people were against me before they ever even knew me... (2) I was a complete stranger to them – there wasn't even a reputation preceding me....</p> <p>Only because I was in management so if I'm in management, I have to be a certain thing. Which was negative, I couldn't potentially be positive in any way. That was the start.</p> <p>I actually don't think you can manage academic staff... I don't think you can manage them and that's not just because some of them might have contrary personalities. It's because of the way the system is set up... it's all very grey about what they will and won't do. (2)</p> <p>...much more of a facilitator than a manager...we facilitate the lecturer... not manage as such. (5)</p> <p>I was just supporting it to happen, with them actually almost the lead if you like. Because they have so much power and control and free reign... They have become more powerful... they are actually in control (2)</p>	<p>Not enough women in the role to create a 'reputation.' Chilly climate, cold (1, 2).</p> <p>Binary of good v bad. Expected to behave according to male norms. Performative. Judged as such (1).</p> <p>System set up according to patriarchal norms (1).</p> <p>Not agentic, autonomous. Control and power is located amongst the academic group. (as well as at the top). Powerless (2).</p> <p>Senior management is male, hands-off with people, left to the middle management, mostly women to do the 'emotional' work (3).</p>	<p>Stepping into the role – sounds 'gentle', delicate (compare to 'parachute').</p> <p>Managing academics is like 'herding cats' - Ramsden (1998)</p> <p>A puppet, on strings, like Pinnochio, not a 'real' manager</p>
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<p>because the upper management I don't think supports the middle management to manage the academic staff in any real way (2)</p> <p>Negative interactions with senior management have created a culture that's just impossible to break down. (0) Why would people mistrust management ... unless they have a sense, they have reason to ... distrust it historically. (2)</p> <p>There's a divide - academic staff are over here, the Head over there and then... the Head of School, the Registrar, the President... they're on the other side. There's certainly a divide. (2)</p> <p>Is there a 'we' in management? There should be a 'we' but there isn't.</p>	<p>Organisational culture, patriarchal, male dominated, autocratic (1).</p> <p>Organisational culture – divisions, lack of support (2)</p>	
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<p>Box 6 Male-dominated senior management</p> <p>... There's a whole level of senior management ahead of us who take the decisions; or don't as the case may be. (5) Everything comes to us but half the time we don't have say on where some of the stuff goes.</p> <p>I don't feel... that I have a sounding board in my senior manager. (0) On the personal support side... the systems don't allow it – they don't recognise it because its male dominated.(2)</p> <p>... doesn't always work out the way senior management might like by putting the human being first ... it might mean the result would be a little 'diluted.' (0)</p> <p>There is a disconnect between senior and middle-management. There is a feeling that senior management would not support you... you're left to fight your own corner.</p> <p>...fulfils a certain type of educational support, just when I ask... But sometimes I don't know what I'm asking... therefore I haven't got a load of support. (3)</p> <p>...the feeling in here would be they (senior management) would not support you... you're left to fight your own corner. (6)</p> <p>... I think that the right people aren't in the right jobs (6) ... my experience is that... they don't always go for the best</p>	<p>Power imbalance (2). Women's collective, empowerment ... not encouraged by patriarchal system</p> <p>Male senior management – doesn't recognise or value women's strengths or capital. System not designed to value personal support (1, 2).</p> <p>Not managing in a 'male' way, women's way of working, 'less than' (1, 2).</p> <p>Lack of confidence, unsure, afraid to have a public voice, afraid to seek support (1, 3)</p> <p>Support not built-in to a male-dominated system (2,3).</p>	<p>'Thinking back through our Mothers' (Woolf, 1929), women supporting one another, the tradition of spinning and weaving, women talking together</p> <p>In the middle, puppets. Strings being pulled.</p> <p>Abandoned in the 'woods', left to the wolves to fight your own corner</p>
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<p>candidate. They go for the candidate that fits the criteria... (3)</p> <p>... my boss, we had a good working relationship. She gave me a lot of free reign. (6) ... She would have known I probably have a vision for things...</p> <p>... my new boss... He is operating in a very bureaucratic system... it stifles me and I couldn't work that way. I knew it would get me into trouble. I would have been constantly on edge...</p> <p>...I am probably a bit of a lone ranger... might be my own worst enemy...</p> <p>but I find these are stumbling blocks and I don't achieve. (6)</p> <p>The senior management is predominantly male and the middle management is predominantly female... They need to have the women caring for the ones on the ground... the men recognise the need for a woman to be in place to do that.... because we are the ones listening, because we are women... (2)</p>	<p>Women as visionary, creative if not overly-managed, if there is mutual support and trust (2, 3)</p> <p>Oppressive, male-dominated bureaucracy. In 'trouble' if do not conform. (1)</p> <p>Lone ranger, not playing by the rules, the male norms. Judging herself as 'negative' as a consequence of not playing (1)</p> <p>Power imbalance (2) 'Care' ethic, women doing the emotional work (3)</p>	<p>Strings being cut, broken threads</p> <p>Left to the wolves</p> <p>Warrior princess, going her own way. Left to the wolves if go against the rules, to fight your own corner</p> <p>Falling off the edge of the precipice</p> <p>Being shaped and moulded to 'fit' the image of what we as women are good at.</p>
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One of the first activities we undertook in this workshop session was to read through the collated and categorised speech extracts/ narrative fragments on an individual basis, then we came together to share our thoughts and ideas on where it might lead to. Dr. Morrissey's observations focused on gender issues, where the dialogue highlighted the participants' experiences of being a 'deficit' and the 'other' in their workplaces; a lack of public voice, a sense of being disempowered by a patriarchal culture, the burden of 'care', balancing femininity with the performative masculine norms of management. Dr. McDonagh on the other hand identified with the words and images that I had highlighted and which could act as stimuli for movement or speech sequences such as 'flexible', 'shape and mould', 'them and us', 'fixing and mending', 'parachuted', 'lunatic' and 'tears' to highlight a few). My responses in some ways were a mixture of these two perspectives having come prepared to extract dialogue for the purposes of scripting, and with the knowledge that I was using a critical feminist lens through which to view the field material. As discussed in Chapter 7, I had categorised the selected speech into a number of different boxes, loosely coded to refer to Becoming (a Head of Department)/ Early Days in the Role/ Keeping Everyone Happy/ If you're a Manager/ Male Dominated Senior Management/ Women's Ways of Working/ Being a Woman in the Role. These categories emerged out of the participant narratives as loose commonalities.

The Chorus

I came to the first session with the idea of using an unseen 'chorus' (See Box 3, below), which the image of the phrase '*whisperings in the corridor*' in the transcripts had inspired in me. One of the characters I had played in a production of Peter Schaffer's (1981) '*Amadeus*' was a Venticello - a "purveyor of fact, rumour and gossip" - who roamed amongst the whispering Citizens of Vienna. Schaffer directs the "savage" whispering to "overlap and increase in volume, slashing the air with wicked intensity" (Shaffer, 1981, p. 1). This element of that performance left a lasting impression on me - the powerful sense of menace that

acted as an overture to the story that was to unfold, the creation of a 'citizenry' out of a relatively small cast, the ability to present to the audience an 'alternative view'.

The origins of the chorus appear to date back to early Greek theatre. The chorus was both immersed in the action and removed from it - commenting on the events and the thoughts and emotions of the protagonist, intervening between the actor and the audience, witnessing for the protagonist but also organically participating in the action (Wilson and Goldfarb, 1994, p. 44). Contemporary revived interpretations of the chorus are many and varied. The idea of using the chorus in an ethnodrama of the real and lived experiences of the participants in this research study aligns with the presentation of research that seeks to raise the social awareness of the reader. Saldana (2011) suggests that choral exchanges or choral collages can be used "purposefully for dramatic effect" to create multiplicity of voice and character or "ironic juxtaposition, comic cacophony, or surrealist chaos" (Saldana 2011, p. 109). The technique could be used to enhance audience engagement as well providing me with a vehicle for the presentation of other character(s) who could act as intermediaries between the world of the play and the 'real' world of the audience, whose perspective it helps to shape. Working with Fiona, we extracted dialogue which we thought would fit this purpose and this was the main element of the script that we worked on in the two improvising sessions. The choice of what to extract was driven by my memories of the whispers that I had heard myself in the corridors when I took up the role of Head of Department for the first time, and I extrapolated that to include phrases from across the participant narratives, which were co-constructions and collaborations of our shared experiences. See below for extracts from the participant narratives that became the basic building blocks for the chorus.

Extracts from participant stories, showing ideas for the 'Chorus'

Box 3

I heard whisperings in the corridor and at coffee

(possible audio recordings, whisperings, male and female voices - could be a chorus repeated at intervals, ref: Schaeffer's 'Amadeus').

"They'd give anyone that job these days,"

"Who does she think she is? She is only in the door.

"Who is she to manage me?" (use a male voice)

'Is she going to be bossing me? (use a male voice)

"She doesn't have the qualifications in that area, everyone knows that"

"We can't talk to you now because you're management."

"Is there integrity to giving her the position?"

Will she be able to represent us, fight for us, promote us?

Because she is not part of us"

'There wasn't even a reputation preceeding me'

Physical Movement

During these workshop sessions, I primarily worked on the 'chorus' as a means of learning how to inject movement and physicality into the script. Working with the idea of 'story-threads' we improvised around a collection of coloured ribbons, attached to a cane, rather like a maypole, which just happened to be in the rehearsal space. I practiced moving to the rhythm of a spoken chorus line, moving only on the beat and slowly emerging from behind the curtain of ribbons, to help me gain some sense of physical movement that is not driven by dialogue or motivational actions to move the story forward. I also worked with a large mirror, which I used to create the 'character' of the male-dominated organisation; the 'audience' could see themselves in this mirror depending on where it was placed in the rehearsal space. The mirror also served to reflect the performer, myself in the composite role, back to both myself and hence to the participants – our co-constructed stories acting

as 'mirror' for each of us, reaffirming our own experiences as being shared by others in a similar position. As women, most of us look at ourselves in mirrors on a daily basis, checking to see how we look, how we present to the outside world before we leave our 'domestic' sphere. Feminism has drawn on the metaphor of the 'mirror image' encouraging women to refrain from acting as 'looking glasses' to men's vanity (Woolf, 1929) - women are victims of themselves as much as of men if we continue to uphold patriarchy by reflecting back what men want to see. We need to 'shatter' the glass in the mirror and project our own image into the world (Rowbotham, 1973).

Exploring the physical act of moving on the beat or to the rhythm of the chorus was coupled with an exploration of movement to music. I wanted to heed the advice of the 'Frantic Assembly' (Graham and Hoggett, 2009) team on the use of instrumental pieces, which would act to support rather than detract from the scenes, and which would not distract either the audience or myself. I felt the need even at this point to consider a 'soundtrack' that might include an overture, something that would set the tone and direct the audience inwards towards the story, followed by music that might act to break the short scenes up, or transition from one to another, with a final track that could inform the conclusion.

The Dramatic Arc

The final element I looked at during these workshops was the need for, or not as the case may be (Wilkinson, cited in Ackroyd and O'Toole 2012), a dramatic arc and possible plot lines that could create such an arc, emerging from the tabulated narrative extracts. Embedded in this discussion was the need to decide on the 'principal' character, who would carry the story forward. Even though the principal character would be a composite this character still needed to have her own backstory, and her own trajectory through the story that was to unfold before her, with her own ending. Even though her words would be 'real' or verbatim (see Chapter 7 for an in-depth discussion on this), taken relatively intact from the participant interviews and representative across all of the participants and our

experiences, the creation of a composite character is an artifice, and she was therefore going to be fictive. As such, her journey through the 'lived' experiences would also be fictive - I needed to create that journey for her, and I decided to make 'aesthetic' decisions as the ethnodramatist in favour of artistry over social inquiry (Saldana 2011; Ackroyd and O'Toole, 2012). The trajectory the composite character follows is that of Julie, who eventually left her organisation because she tells us that she found it so hard to 'fit into the mould' they (senior management) wanted her to fit into. As the ethnodramatist, it is in fact not 'my' story, as I am still in the role. Of the other participants, however, four of them have left the management role they discussed as part of the research process so the trajectory of the composite character is representative in that sense.

The 'Mise-en-Scene'

Fictionalising the dialogue or not is one consideration, but in tandem, we also need to examine how we intend to represent the scene (the '*mise-en-scene*') as this can add another layer of fictionality, which in ethnodrama can help to provide a means to put some distance between the reader and the story (Saldana, 2011). Creating a '*mise-en-scene*' is another way to 'make-believe' or bring an element of pretence or suspension of reality into the theatre. The use of personal narrative in dramatised form aligns well with stylised as opposed to realist theatre, thus keeping the audience grounded in social reality and open to the message that is being conveyed. There are many techniques that could be viewed as stylistic; intercutting dialogue with action to generate pace and to link stories to move the plot along; directions for the use of multi-media to 'set' particular scenes; transposing contemporary 'real' events in time or place or even genre (fable or fairy-tale for example). Such techniques can act to create distance and shape the reader experience into something else. They can place the reader as audience "just close enough but also far enough away" (Ackroyd and O'Toole, 2012, p. 66) so that the experience is still one of 'meaning-making' and can have impact. Dramatic techniques in the Brechtian tradition (Wilson and Goldfarb, 1994; Krasner, 2008, p.170) involve the creation of a 'distancing' or 'nullifying' effect as he

believed the audience should always know they are watching a play and should be prevented from simply identifying with the characters in the play – they should remain intellectually distanced. Techniques such as breaking the fourth wall (addressing the audience directly) are designed to distance the actor from the fictionality of the story so they would not forget reality. This was in line with the overall goal of Epic Theatre to promote social change which demands that the audience remain cognisant of reality and hence socially aware (DeLong et al. 2015, p. 6; Krasner, 2008). Because of this engagement with social reality, Brechtian techniques can coalesce well with ethnodrama where performers relate past events directly to an audience.

Other considerations re the use of stylism can simply come down to the theatrical staging constraints if written for performance, and what can be realised for each particular setting. Given that most ethnodramas are performed or ‘audienced’ in what Spry (2001) refers to as ‘sterile’ academic conference settings, these constraints must remain a serious consideration. For Saldana (2011), naturalistic or realistic settings are always the better option when portraying real-person narrative, but he acknowledges that this may not always be physically possible. As I could no longer aspire to a theatrical staging within the life of the PhD process, I worked towards presentations within the academic conference setting in the post-PhD dissemination process.

Appendix 3

Scripting an Ethnodrama, Scene by Scene

Scene 1 – The Tower

One of the strongest memories of my own is that sense of isolation and loneliness (Lines 1-10, 11-12, 14-15) that came with the job in those early days. Being moved into an office on your own, shut away from social interaction with colleagues who were peers just days before - now they only came when they wanted something. There were no more social calls. This was a common experience amongst the participants, particularly well-articulated by Julie. During the devising process, this concept of isolation and loneliness had brought to mind the story of Rapunzel, locked away in her turret, only interacting when someone came to her, hence the inspiration for the opening scene and the performer being placed in a 'Tower.'

As my new office was not intended to be specifically used as a Head of Department office, it was not as soundproofed as the purpose-built ones I moved into in my later career, so I could hear everything that was said on the corridors, but the speakers were nameless and faceless. This had led to the notion of a whispering chorus. During the devising process, I explored different ways of physically moving to the beat of the chorus to interweave movement with speech, and I split the chorus lines up across the scene, so that it comes in and out of the performer's early experiences. It ebbs and flows. Davis (<https://ribdavis.com>) recommends splitting lines to give variety and 'miscellany' to scenes so that they are not 'mono' topical. The first lines of the chorus in this scene are fictional, taken from the classic telling of the story of Rapunzel. The chorus is spoken in whispers at first, but gradually gets louder and louder. Similarly, the performer speaks in a low, quiet whispering voice at first, evoking an ethereal, slightly unreal presence, begging the question from the audience is this fairy-tale or reality? The fairy-tale genre itself plays with the juxtaposition of 'real-not real' forms of expression (Warner, 2014). Molly intones in her second interview that when she looked back on her years in the role, it felt like it was all a

'bad dream.' Both Kolbenschlag (1979) and de Beauvoir (1949) explore woman as *Sleeping Beauty*, she who is never fully awake to herself. The musical selection is a short segment from Bjork's rendition of '*It's so quiet*' to complement the 'shushing' action (fingers to lips) of the performer. This '*quiet*' segment is repeated whenever the chorus is spoken during the scene.

Francis spoke about the isolation she experienced in her senior role, where she was the first woman and then the only woman for a number of years, eventually tiring of the exclusion and the effort needed to make herself feel 'included' in the 'Boy's Club' (Lines 16-19). The handing down of wisdom from one generation of women to the next is a common theme in second-generation feminism (Woolf, 1929; Angelou, 1993) and women as 'collective' forms the very backbone of the revival of fairy-tale as folk literature in the nineteenth century as traditional folk stories were gathered from those told by women to each other as they passed the time going about their domestic chores (Zipes, 2014).

Both myself and Molly had the experience of being complete strangers to our respective staff when we started off in the Head of Department role (Lines 20-22). I felt my own reception to be somewhat 'chilly' as a result, as did Molly. In professional environments, it is accepted that representation by one of their 'own' is more acceptable than to be managed by someone who is considered an outsider (Hughes et al., 1987). The doubts of the staff were matched by my own doubts as I had little preparation for the role (Lines 27 – 31). In my own story, and in both Molly's and Julie's, our own backgrounds were not necessarily directly related to the academic specialism of the departments we were to manage so we understood ourselves to be seen as 'outsiders' irrespective of whether we had been in the organisation prior to the appointment or not. Personally, this contributed to my own lack of confidence in the role for some time into my first contract. Jane spoke about 'falling into' the role without any real intentionality on her part and April drew on the metaphor of being 'parachuted' into her senior lectureship role when she started in the organisation which led to resentment amongst her peers at first. In the corporate environment, the current phenomena of women achieving executive leadership roles in times of crisis when the chances of failure are significantly higher is being termed the "glass

cliff" (Ryan and Haslam, 2005)). The metaphor provided a stimulus for movement (Lines 23-26) in the scene and a transition into the more 'real' environment of the new 'office', which the performer sets up herself, a sign of her attempting to take control now that she has 'landed' here. She also adopts a stronger spoken voice, efficient and more business-like.

Julie recounted a story of meeting a lecturing colleague on her first day (the day she heard she got the job, which would have been announced widely) and her first experience of being different or 'other' - no longer one of them (Lines 32-36). The narrative of 'them and us', the divide between management and lecturing staff, is well played out in most of the participant interviews, which describe overtly exclusionary behaviours as in Julie's case or 'Molly's - there is no 'we', no togetherness. It is also experienced in the form of less overt but equally distancing behaviours, as in Jane's experience where they could not give her any space or time for herself, or in Francis' case, where the men were clearly uncomfortable with her in department meetings while her female colleagues exhibited jealousy towards her when she achieved the senior role. This story provided an opportunity to introduce the 'character' of the department teaching staff, in the form of an 'other' and who appears again in later scenes, to whom the performer speaks directly rather than addressing the audience. This is one of the many devices that can be utilised (Saldana, 2011) and which can serve to embed alternative viewpoints into the monologue as well as reducing some of the Brechtian 'distance' between the audience and the story - it is an opportunity to engage in 'masking' that is part and parcel of conventional theatre performance (Govan, Nicholson and Norminton, 2007) thereby providing a miscellany of audience experience.

I never set out to be a Head of Department as such in my own organisation. The opportunity arose at a time when part-time teaching opportunities were on the wane, and it represented financial stability along with the flexibility of not being constrained by a teaching timetable. As a lone parent, these were big considerations for me (Lines 55-56) but some of the same criteria were equally important for Julie, April, Molly and Deirdre also. Francis also speaks of the inherent flexibility of the role making it a 'good job for a woman' with the implication that 'care' responsibilities can be more easily managed than in a

teaching role, constrained by timetables. Like Jane, I found myself falling into the role because the opportunity presented itself at a particular time in my life when I needed the stability and financial security. The notion of not actually aspiring to management dominates Deirdre's narrative of her early days in the role and to some extent, Julie's – neither felt they were necessarily qualified for it, without previous management experience. They admit to having had no aspirations nor interest in it. Lack of female expectation or ambition for leadership is a complex interaction of both organisational and social patriarchal culture, as being defined as 'other' to the dominant male who naturally assumes himself to be an 'inheritor' of power, and gatekeeping on the part of the dominant male hegemony which promotes from within its own ranks (See Chapter 6).

The scene concludes with the performer ensconced in her new 'turret', alone and quiet again, the whispers getting louder now. She has decided to take the chance and apply for the role. What can she lose, she asks both herself and the audience? Nothing except her mind maybe (Lines 59 – 60). Stories of management being akin to madness and insanity arose in almost all of the participant interviews. It is viewed as an almost 'impossible' job, and moreso in the environment of 'new managerialism', the demands of which place a higher burden on women than on men in the role due to the caring responsibilities which are predominantly the preserve of women (Grummell et al. 2009). The connection between woman's embodiment and her lack of control or reason has been discussed in detail in Chapter 6, but women's non-conformity in patriarchal societies has historically been 'punished' with being forcibly removed from that society, isolated and distanced so as not to undermine the dominant male hegemony with autonomous and agentic behaviours.

Scene 2 - The Honeymoon

The sense of being thrown in at the deep end was very much to the fore in our stories. I felt completely at a loss when I first started in the role. I was simply given an office, which I went into one morning, and waited until the phone rang. I had no training (Lines 30 -34)

in how to deal with staff or students, no briefing on policies and procedures even. Deirdre after a number of years in the role still hadn't received training 'that mattered'. Jane speaks of her technical background being of help but if she hadn't that to call upon, she wonders how she could have coped in the early days. Julie found she had to rely on her 'gut' instinct. There are no real pathways to leadership in higher education (Davis, 2008) and it is a case of sink or swim, but this affects women more so than men because there is an in-built support system – a 'Boy's Club' – that operates to identify and mentor males into leadership roles, a tendency for those already in power (males) to promote those most closely resembling themselves (homosociality). I never expected a 'honeymoon' period (Lines 1-2), but a gradual easing in, an opportunity to be mentored and supported in the early days might serve to encourage more women to apply. As it is, the lack of peer support amongst management is patently obvious to teaching staff, and this was experienced and well-articulated by Julie, Molly, Deidre and Jane in middle-management and Francis in her senior management role.

Being left as the sole provider after my marital separation also makes the image of the honeymoon flowers being thrown in the bin particularly significant for me. Honeymoons can be short-lived, but they should be at the very least full of promise. The sense of potential and promise, and the 'take a chance' attitude we see at the end of the first scene has started to dissipate already as the performer is being thrown in at the deep end (Lines 1-10), with no time to prepare herself for the task ahead. But she quickly prepares herself physically and takes the time to don the apparel of management – a business suit, with heels – the former conforming to male norms of dress in a management role, the latter, a nod to her femininity (Line 11). The experience of being told that I was dressed for the part was a story I shared with Jane. I met a male colleague on the corridor on the way to my first meeting. Being dressed for the role was important to me in those early days – it was like donning a cloak or mask – I felt like it shielded me as a person and projected a 'better' version of me, someone perhaps more suited to the role I found myself in. I felt more authoritative, as if my voice would be listened to because I looked more like what they were expecting to see as their manager.

After all these years, meetings with large staff teams (Lines 13-30) can still be daunting – April refers to some of hers as ‘horrendous’ - and the memory of the earliest of these for me is still very raw. Without experience to call on, without a deep knowledge of the history of the department, and the slights and hurts that can be felt, and which can ‘fester and fester’, you can walk in as if a lamb to the slaughter. There is a sense of being ‘thrown to the wolves’ (April), left to ‘fight your own corner’ (Julie) and the levels of support from senior management can be very poor as articulated by the participants. The divides between management and teaching staff can run deep, and Molly speaks vehemently of the open hostility towards management that has deep, historical roots in her organisation, but which as a new manager, you are not privy to. But just by being in management, that automatically puts you on a negative footing, from which you have to work hard to extricate yourself (Lines 23-25). The performer prostrates herself before the staff team, seeking their help and guidance (Lines 26-27). For Julie, that resulted in a positive engagement, for others not so, and that includes myself, as I always believed that it sent out a message that inexperience could be taken advantage of (Lines 28-30). These lines are also I think very evocative and left me with an overarching sense of female submission and deferral to the dominant male voice in these meetings (Francis), which April refers to as ‘masculine playgrounds’.

Retreating back to her ‘turret’ again, she speaks to an old lecturing colleague, a man who has been in the system for a long time, someone who would not go for the job himself (Francis) but who dispenses his wisdom from the safety and comfort of the side-lines (Lines 35-44). In the next sequence we see the performer engaging in the relentless ‘busy-ness’ (Lines 46-53) of the job. The participants shared stories of ‘madness’ and ‘insanity’ of the actual workload of management and the impossibility of getting through that workload in any one day. Deirdre used the notion of ‘being burdened’ which particularly resonated with me – starting the week off being ‘unburdened’ but even within a few hours, the heavy, weighed-down feelings of ‘being burdened’ descend – there is something very visceral about this image and how it describes the relentlessness (Lines 48 – 50) of the daily workload at the peak of the academic term. Images of Kolbenschlag’s (1979) ‘Cinderella’ come to mind,

and her servitude to work that diminishes her and Bettelheim's interpretation of the moral of the tale as being one of coming to know the value of virtue and the possibilities of redemption through hard work – "Even out of the lowly matter like ashes, things of great value can be gained, if one knows how to do it" (Bettelheim, 1976, p.221-222). The 'unreasonable demands' of the role (Grummell, B., Devine, D., and Lynch, K., 2009; Devine, D., Grummell, B., and Lynch, K., 2011) invoke a feeling of lunacy, another reference to the possibility as women of 'losing your mind' in this job (Lines 51 – 53), as you work a punishing schedule in one job, only to go home to another (Lines 67- 71). The performer is 'leaping and lurching' from one crisis to the next, but then, in the destructive act of 'reflecting ourselves back' (Rowbotham, 1973; Woolf, 1929; Angelou, 1993) as men would like us to be, we are prone to taking on even more work if there we can find the room (Lines 50 – 62).

All the participants spoke about bringing the work home with us. Francis spoke of the need to establish boundaries, because the work becomes '24/7' for women, but she believed that men can compartmentalise better than we can, which can contribute to their longevity in the role. For the participants with care responsibilities, bringing the work home can have a very damaging effect on the home environment. Molly was very forthcoming about this and felt herself begin to resent the work because of this. The domestic sphere with 'care' responsibilities is evoked by the sweeping brush and the reference to the children. The lines between the two spaces are blurred – she brings her office into her home (Molly, Jane, Julie) and her 'mothering' into her office (Molly). Taking work home with me is and was a regular occurrence. When my daughter was very young in those early days, I can recall many an afternoon when I was late for a school pick-up because I thought I could just clear this one last email or take this one last meeting. Her primary school principal may have abiding memories of my daughter being perpetually late in the mornings because I was checking my email at first light, to get ahead of the day (Lines 67-71) or we overslept because I was working late into the night.

The chorus in this scene comes mainly from Jane's interview where we spoke about our sense of being on hand to fix and mend things all the time. This put me in mind of women

stitching and weaving, pulling things together and the image of the spinning wheel is used as a backdrop (projection) at intervals throughout this scene.

Scene 3 - 'Sometimes there were tears...'

For most of us in the role, working directly with, and being responsible for, people represents the most demanding and 'draining' (Deirdre) aspect of the role. Leaders manage and managers lead – the two roles overlap but they are not normally synonymous (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2004). Managers are supposed to be concerned with "planning, investigating, organizing and control" while leaders deal with the "interpersonal aspects" of the manager's job (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2004, p. 596). In the HE sector, the Head of Department deals directly with the academic staff and the higher up you go in the ranks of senior management, the less contact there is with people. In fact, Kreitner and Kinicki's (2004) role definition above is almost reversed in HE to the extent that executive management or leadership plans from (a safe) distance while managers implement. There is a strong sense in the sector that Heads of Department in fact carry the bulk of the workload in terms of planning and organising as well, as we have to gain consensus and buy-in from staff for any planning to be effective. This means that we have to 'tailor', dilute or adjust perhaps the often 'grand' strategic plans to make them more palatable to staff – otherwise they are not implementable. The notion of 'control' interests me because the only kind of control that can be exerted in an organisation whose only resource is people is control as it applies to managing people – but that is not the experience that most of us have had– if anything, as Molly articulates particularly well, one would wonder who in fact is 'in control' of whom. It is also however not the experience that we (the participants) are searching for – there is a sense that we want to distribute the leadership and share the load, get buy-in and develop a sense of ownership over the future planning for the Department amongst the staff. Molly and Julie were very forthcoming on this notion of sharing responsibility and encouraging staff to take ownership. This scene looks at the interpersonal skills needed to do the job effectively and how it is virtually impossible to please all of the people, all of the time,

though that is what we as female Heads of Department appear to demand of ourselves, because we like to please (Walters, 2011).

The scene opens with the performer addressing the audience directly, almost lecture-like, telling them how it is (Lines 1-3) – it is almost impossible to ‘manage’ academic staff (Ramsden, 1998). Molly spoke of some of the staff having contrary personalities, and I agonised over whether I would keep this in or not as it would appear to paint academic staff with a broad brush-stroke of general contrariness, and that is not the case. But working directly with people is difficult and there are some difficult personalities that the system (Line 4 – 7) as it is set up in HE supports perhaps more than is warranted, often at the expense of very dedicated and professional academics who give tirelessly in their work. The phrase Molly used put me in mind of Snow White and her sojourn with the Seven Dwarves - she can stay as long as she earns her keep by serving their day-to-day needs. Snow White can redeem herself through hard work and service to the needs of others, some of whom are difficult to please (Kolbenschlag, 1979). The highly-unionised nature of sections of the HE system in particular creates uncertainties in terms of what can be asked of staff, to the detriment of some very dedicated staff who go way beyond their contractual duties for the betterment of their department (Deirdre speaks to this very strongly). This then gives a sense that the power lies with them, and not us, and we are simply at their mercy, like puppets on strings. The academic staff seem to have the *‘bread, the butter and the jam’* (Line 8, from Deirdre’s monologue) – they are in the best place in the organisation, with the best terms and conditions and can direct from the side-lines without any of the responsibilities that go with the taking of actual decisions. Deirdre in her conversations with me compares the work output of the academic staff with those of the administration teams who make things happen in her organisation, but who get none of the ‘glory’ and work under far less favourable conditions.

A lot of what we do is damage limitation (Julie and Jane). Sometimes enthusiasm for ideas can get the better of planning and forethought and staff might *‘run with their own ideas’* (Jane’s monologue) but the final product is *‘never as it could have been’* (Lines 9-14) and we are left to pick up the pieces. A female colleague, with whom I once worked directly as a

peer Head, likened it to her cat dropping dead birds at her door – the motivations were good but the outcome unexpected and damaging. Building up a relationship of trust with staff helps in this process of damage limitation, something that Julie was very forthcoming about, as she was on the topic of praising people and giving recognition for the work that they do. During the interviews, I followed Saldana’s (2011) and Wilkinson’s (cited in Atkinson and O’ Toole, 2012) advice and sought out stories that could serve to offer an alternative voice for the audience to listen to, particularly when the delivery is monologic. The fear for me starting out was that I would not be open to hearing the positive experiences of the women participants in the role, nor be willing to explore my own. However, I actively sought them out and shared my own stories of what I enjoy about the role – developing and creating new programmes along with the more technical aspects in terms of planning and organisation, an interest which I share with Jane. All of the participants to my mind brought and/ or continue to bring their ‘femininity’ into the role in terms of an innate desire to support, promote and encourage others in their endeavours (Lines 15 – 26). There is almost a stereotypical (Nicholson, 1996) female wiliness to the tactic of ‘*gently pushing*’ (Jane’s monologue) staff in the direction we want them to go in.

But then there is the aspect of the job that is perhaps the hardest of all – having to ask staff to do a task that he or she may think is not theirs to do, and in a system where there is neither ‘*carrot nor stick*’ as Francis points out, it can be a very difficult thing to do as a manager (Lines 27 – 33). The difficulty lies not just from the task-oriented perspective – whether the job gets done or not – but for us as women, we can struggle with the potential break-down in the personal relationship that can ensue if the directive is not accepted. We like to get on with people, we like to be ‘liked’ but more than that, our femininity intuitively recognises that our job is made so much easier when we can rely on the personal relationship as a force for action as Heads of Department - if it is damaged, our job becomes so much harder. Such exchanges can often become emotional with female staff members in particular (Line 34) and I titled this scene accordingly. In my own experience, I think I dread the emotional scene more than the angry one – I have had, as have others, such interactions with both male and female staff members where the result was anger and

intense frustration. I have been on the receiving end of extreme anger and I have stood shaken and distraught afterwards, often resorting to tears myself in the solitary confines of my own room. The lasting damage of an angry interaction has been for me somewhat less however than that of an emotional exchange leading to relationship fracture and breakdown. As women, we seem to try really hard to explain our decisions, rationalise them, take the emotion out of the situation – perhaps because we have been told that that is what a ‘good’ (read ‘male’) manager should do (Lines 36 – 46). However, I have had exchanges where my main concern was not about the task that may or may not get done but about the potential damage that this might cause to our relationship in the future, the loss associated with that damage, and the guilt, loneliness and isolation that might follow (Lines 48-50).

Such exchanges force us then to ‘take sides’ – to become immersed in our identities as managers in the organisation, to acknowledge that we are always *‘them’* and not *‘us’* (Molly) as far as academic staff are concerned. The performer takes stock of her new and enforced positionality and heads to a management meeting (Line 51). She physically moves her desk so that it becomes the boardroom table and this time she sits behind the desk, facing out to the audience – she is now a woman amongst men at the ‘top’ table (Francis) – another ‘tower’ of sorts. Lines 52 – 74 are taken from four different storied experiences that Francis shared and I have amalgamated them into one singular and hence fictional event. The performer is now seated at the top table, ready to get on with the job (Line 58). But the men are in a self-congratulatory cycle, from which she is excluded (Lines 54 – 57). She intervenes (Line 59 – 60), pointing out the work that needs to be done. But her ‘otherness’ is starkly highlighted – if she was one of them, she would understand this group behaviour (Lines 54 – 57) that was taking place as an important ‘homosocial’ ritual – but she does not understand, as she is not one of them, and her aspirations to be so are therefore groundless. The chorus is this time constituted of not the academic staff, a group from which she is also excluded, but the mostly male senior management team. She is simply not one of them. The derogatory suggestion that she is having a ‘bad hair’ day comes from a story shared by Francis of a female colleague of hers who had a very hard time with her senior male

colleagues. It resonated with me not least because the act of brushing long hair is a starkly feminine image and has its place in the fairy-tale genre as a symbol of female youth, beauty and allure (Hustvedt, 2016, p. 54) but also because of its association with the notion of female madness in patriarchal societies and suggests an inability to cope with the stresses of the job, as perceived by her male colleagues.

The performer then finds herself in the position of having to defend herself and her work as having equal status with that of her male colleagues (Lines 63-72), but rather than attempt to stand up for herself, she remains silent and allows herself to be overlooked because she is simply not being listened to (73-74). The closing lines of this scene also emerge from Francis' monologue, where she recalls being goaded about the fact that she was the only woman amongst men at a particular meeting; her response was to make it clear she was equal to them in all things and that was how she saw herself, even if no one else did.

Scene 4 - The Doormat!

The scene opens with the performer asleep on the table, drained and exhausted from looking after the needs of others (Lines 1-9). A projection of Snow White asleep in her glass coffin is to suggest our heroine in her suspended animation is glad of the rest – a reference to Dworkin's "cardinal principle" of sexist ontology, that is when woman is 'good', her life is one of such service and submission that death can only be more of the same (Dworkin, 1974, p.41). Deirdre spoke about the draining effect of looking after everyone in her department, and the pressure to keep everyone happy, all of the time. The effect is likened to that of being pulled in every direction by unseen strings, like a puppet who is being manipulated by 'others' (Lines 10-17), with no agency or autonomy of her own. Molly likens it to minding children, all the time pulling out of you as you go about your work. Again, this speaks to the blurring of the boundaries between the private and public sphere for women

with 'care' responsibilities. As women, we are socialised to "*give, give, give*" (Molly's monologue) but nothing comes back.

The next sequence (Lines 18-29) emerged as a storied event in Jane's monologue, where she described trying to create some space for herself by going away for a few days, only to find that, as she was contactable and in 'reach', her work breaks through the boundary walls of that private time that she had set up for herself. Her need for space was not respected and indeed, almost ridiculed on her return. The performer then sits down, on the edge of the stage or on the floor, to be closer to the audience so that she can 'confess' to her guilty feelings of '*thinking badly*' about the more difficult staff (Lines 30- 43), or worse, acting on those feelings ('*tearing her hair out*'). A good woman would not think unkindly of others – as women we are not reared to 'unkindness' or not being 'nice' (Hustvedt, 2016). But we rationalise these guilty feelings because we have no way of releasing that tension as there is no opportunity to '*sound off*' with our management colleagues because that is not encouraged by the men at the top, as they '*do not see the need for that*' (lines 44 – 47). However Molly contends that those men at the top recognise that women are needed to do the 'housework' of the organisation, to take 'care' of others, as we have the empathic skills necessary for this task and they do not (Bowden and Mummery, 2014). Women's association with caring and nurturing are deeply rooted in Western culture (See Chapter 6). The female construction of self is one which leads to the valuing of relationship, communication and connections and this is a facet of the participants' "women's way of working" that features strongly in the field texts. But Molly contends that this 'strength' is in fact used against us to keep us embroiled in the personal and the emotional, and to keep it away from the senior team, so they do not have to listen to it (Lines 48 – 53).

In Lines 54-61, the performer realises that she no longer wants to do the 'mothering' anymore. She is tired of the constant giving, with nothing coming back. In particular, she observes that it is like mothering children who 'never grow up'. In the tale of Snow White, she is cast in the role of domestic carer for adults who go out to work but need to be minded and mothered on their return. The performer realises that what she really wants to do is be a mother to her own children at home, as it should be. She then asks herself why she

does this? Why does she bring her 'mothering' into her work environment? (Lines 62-69). She realises that there are only two ways to 'be' a woman in this environment – a 'cold-hearted bitch' or a 'doormat'. And in an environment where being 'nice' is considered the only 'feminine' way to be, the only chance of 'getting something back' is to be the latter. It is not easy to straddle the borderlands and practise our gender in such a way that we can retain our status as females as well as that of manager (Devine, D., Grummell, B., and Lynch, K., 2011; Nicholson, 1996). Retaining our status as 'females' can be the stronger driver for some women in these roles (in the case of the performer) but not for others. But those that choose to act on their career ambition and seek equality with men in the boardroom by behaving like them can risk being ridiculed as unfeminine and overly 'masculine' by both her male and female colleagues (Walters, 2011). By doing so, the performer tells us that she would gain more respect from the senior management team as she is very certain that being the 'doormat' is not seen as the way to get ahead for women in middle-management (Lines 69-79).

Scene 5 - 'Once I was a Warrior'

This scene commences with the performer standing on the table once again, mirroring the opening scene, but this time her stance is strong, almost 'male' (standing astride, hands on hips) and defiant. She is remembering back to when she was younger, ambitious, aware of her own capabilities (Lines 1-8). She has become the breadwinner, the worker, the hunter-gatherer. Six of the participants declare themselves to be the primary breadwinners or major earners. She likens herself to the warrior-maiden adventurer (Kolbenshlag, 1979, p. 10) or the warrior-princess-heroine in those fairy-tales which have become largely forgotten in the canon (See Grimm's *The Twelve Huntsmen* for example) due to a process of successive 'patriarchalisation' such that the "young active woman was changed into an active hero" (Zipes 1983, p. 7) and she just became the passive heroine, the 'one who waits' (de Beauvoir, 1949).

Lines 9-15 come from my own biographical story (See Chapter 1) and describe my own upbringing as an only girl in a strongly male household. It meant that I was comfortable working with men in my adult life and I did not see that as a barrier – Francis tells us in her monologue that some women would not have the confidence to work in a strongly male environment (Lines 16-17) but that we (her and I) are strong. But this level of comfort can lead to a perhaps false sense of confidence that you are going to have a ‘voice’ at that top table, that you are going to be ‘listened to’ (Lines 18-22).

The performer muses about this sense of her own self-worth, her younger ‘adventurous’ side which perhaps deluded her into thinking she could ‘play with the big boys’ (Lines 22-28). She blames her ‘ego’ for tricking her in to going for the job and is almost embarrassed to admit that she actually thought she could do it and that she would be taken seriously. Instead, she is brought in to do what women are being used in the middle-management grades to do – the housework of the organisation – she is asked to take difficult staff meetings (Lines 29 – 31). This section emerged from a sequenced of stories embedded in April’s narrative about staff in these meetings behaving like ‘*vipers*’, hissing and snapping at your heels (Lines 32-38), describing them as ‘*a masculine playground*’ where the male voice dominates and hunts in ‘*packs*’. The monologue is interspersed with the chorus again, echoing the whisperings and doubt of others and her own self-doubt that she experienced in the opening scene. The chorus is chanting accusatorily at the performer directly now, in the second person, rather than in the distant and anonymous third person voice that was used in that opening scene. There is no need to hide their disdain now – it can be openly displayed. She has had enough (Lines 37-38) – she tells us that it was just too hard to stay.

The next section is taken from Julie’s monologue where she describes her own reasons for leaving the role – her old female boss left, with whom she had a good working relationship, and her new male boss worked in a very bureaucratic way which did not suit her. In this adaptation (Lines 39-51), the performer turns that ‘mirror’ inwards, and reflects herself back to herself as the male senior team would have her see herself (Woolf, 1929), by rationalising why ‘she’ did not fit the system, rather than the other way around (Line 59). The sequence in lines 60-63 recalls Julie’s sense that her stepping down from the

management ranks was seen as a 'betrayal' by senior management, as if she had turned against the management side of the house.

Molly was very forthright on her need to 'justify' herself in the role and the sequence set out in lines 52-58 sees the performer 'justifying' herself to the audience as to why she does not 'fit' anymore - because things just don't 'sit' right with her, she can no longer be comfortable with who she has become in the role. She cannot continue to work in this stifling environment - she can no longer 'justify' herself to herself. She has had enough (Lines 64-67).

In the final sequence (Lines 68-75) as the performer finishes 'packing up' her office, she muses once again on her role in this disengagement. She sees herself as a 'lone ranger', someone who just could not 'fit' the mould that the senior male management wanted her to fit – as a woman, it was perhaps never meant for her in the first place. In a final act of reflection, she once again turns that mirror inward, and suggests that the problem might be hers, but she leaves the stage with a last look at herself, and is happy that she is leaving as someone who is comfortable with who and what she is. She has not fitted into the mould, but if she had, she suggests to the audience, she might have lost what was unique about her as a woman in the role – she might have lost what made her go for the job in the first place perhaps.

The final line to the audience suggests that the tale has been told as if it were true, and like a fairy-tale ending (Warner, 2014), it may or may not be true. It is up to the audience to make up their own mind.

PostScript

A play written to be read but not performed is referred to in the theatre arts as a 'closet drama' (Saldana, 2010). The outcome of this literary arts-based research process has been the creation of both short-stories and poetic monologues and culminating in an ethnographic playscript. Even though the focus moved away from performance mid-way through, my intention remains to perform it, in either part or whole, in the process of

dissemination. The field of performed ethnography or ethnodrama as a mode of research representation has been steadily gaining acceptance within qualitative inquiry (Denzin, 1997; Saldana 2003, 2005, 2018; Goldstein, 2008). However, there is no doubt that it can still be seen as a somewhat 'risky enterprise' (Warren 2008; Denzin 1997; Saldana 2003), presenting its own set of challenges and dilemmas (Goldstein, 2008). Fontana (2002) states that no matter how well intentioned we are as postmodern researchers, using interview materials exclusively for our own purposes can be exploitative, the risk of which we must always be cognisant, also discussed in Brinkmann (2018). Writing an ethnodrama with the ambition to give live solo performances as part of the dissemination process could ultimately reach out to a wider audience and present an opportunity to 'give back' to the participants who shared their stories with me. It aligns readily with a methodology seeking to study the world from the perspective of living, subjective, interacting human beings (Denzin 1989; 1997). Snyder-Young (2010) posits that performance ethnography, performance texts and theatricality can succeed in rupturing the dominant research paradigms much more so than text-based postmodern research which purports to do so. Performance, as Warren (2008, p. 184) observes, is more "energetic and embodied" than any words on a page could represent, such that, if done well, the audience's view of the world could be "irrevocably changed". While this will always remain a daunting challenge, I take comfort from Saldana's (2011) cautionary words that the possibility of measurable change in one viewing is unlikely and he encourages potential ethnodramatists to have reasonable expectations in this regard in terms of the realisability of staged events.

I have recorded a rehearsed reading of the script as part of this submission and I have taken the opportunity to perform selected scene(s) in a live, conference setting (IRMSS 2019). The reason for this is because I committed to this research because of the lure of live performance, and the possibilities that live performance can realise for new knowledge. The primary reason for writing and staging an ethnodrama must surely be the capacity for a deeper engagement with the research. Reading research can be tedious (Smiegel, 2008; Bowman, 2008; Saldana, 2008) but seeing it performed live can engage an audience

emotionally as well as intellectually as the strength of ethnodrama lies in the relationship between performer and audience *in the moment of performance*.

Bowman (2008, p. 194) states that the difference between the story and its telling is a “significant” one as “sometimes the telling captivates more than the told”. By being left to simply read the script, the reader/audience can be denied the opportunity of fully understanding the research as they are denied access to fully nuanced, live performance. Performance can also help to overcome doubts over what Ellis and Brochner (2000, p. 270) refer to as “interpretive insufficiency”; where fidelity might be compromised by a small data pool for example, or where the research relies too heavily on single-source, subjective memories which can become distorted over time. Research in the social sciences should seek to produce a multi-layered text and live, performed ethnodrama can deliver on this I believe. McCammon et al. (2012) conclude that the opportunity to voice data out loud can bring new insights to the study for the researcher as well as creating an engaging piece of drama for audiences for the research.

One of Saldana’s most engaging pieces for me is his ‘poem’ *“This is not a Performance Text”* (Saldana 2006b). In this piece, Saldana, who is both accomplished theatre artist and established scholar in the field of social sciences, rails somewhat against this grand notion of the ‘performative turn’ as he clearly distinguishes between a textual presentation delivered at a conference or published in a journal and a live, performed staging, where the actors have “endured” many months of rehearsal and production – only the latter to him is truly a ‘performance’. Live performance is a physical, concrete (Boal, 1992) and tangible thing, which leaves its mark on both performer (Scaife, 2013) and audience. Warren (2008) tells us how watching an embodied performance (in this case *‘BALL’*, by Brian Lobel) can take you away from the immediacy of your own life into that of the performer and he describes his often physical desire after watching good autoethnographical performance to ‘hug’ the performer in recognition of the risks taken and the performer’s ‘gift’ to the audience. I will not be “performing trauma” and I take comfort in Ellis’ (1996, p. 23) observation that most of life is commonplace and as such, the “everyday” details of lived experiences tend not to provoke a “raw emotionality” in either performer or the audience.

I do, however, expect to create an opportunity for new insight, to offer both myself and an audience a pair of 'fresh eyes' through which to view these co-constructed lived experiences as women in HE management and leadership in Ireland.

Appendix 4

Additional Participant Poetic Monologues³⁹

Jane

Dressed for the part

I remember

my first time

being a Head.

I was given a cubby-hole

(for an office).

I was walking down the corridor

and I had some form

of a formal dress on

and he said

“Well you look the part”.

Something good in every day

At the end of the day,

I try... (to find)

something good

in the day.

Negativity...

I try not

to let that get on top of me.

“Right, what one (good) thing did I do today?”

³⁹ Not selected for presentation in Chapter 5

Communicate

How staff communicate.

People email me at the most extraordinary times.

And I have one staff member, well I have several,

who would CC my line manager,

and maybe his line manager,

on an email to me;

and maybe if the reply isn't sent...

I actually find it very undermining.

I really dislike it.

The same people who are maybe lecturing to students

on communicating and professional practice.

it's not just your line manager -

it's an email that would be sent to me

and copied to other staff.

Where it wasn't necessary...

Where it shouldn't have been at all.

It creates bad feeling.

It does.

I would have welcomed the person coming talking to me first about it.

It would have resolved it in a heartbeat.

What's the angle?

Staff running with their own agendas

and you're maybe picking up the pieces afterwards.

Half the time you... think

"What's the angle?"

You feel paranoia in this job.

Even if you're doing a good one.

You need to be {a bit} paranoid.

You need to know that every time you start a conversation with someone
you need to think

"There's something behind this and I'm not sure what's going on."

Julie

A Job Description?

So... you didn't know what to quite make of the job when you started it?

Uhm, yeah there was no guidelines whatsoever;

What I was supposed to do

or where I was supposed to be,

nothing.

There was no job description –

ok, there was a job description but like, nothing.

This thing that the HR sends you out but there's nothing in place.

No exactly, not at all.

There was no guidelines

I was given, no training.

... (my boss) sat with me

and certainly would have been supporting me

but there was absolutely nothing,

"How do I handle things?

What do I do if someone comes in with a complaint?"

Nothing, it was just purely left up to my gut reaction.

How long was it before you felt,

“I’m kind of getting comfortable with this,

I know where I’m at

and I know what I can do...”

I suppose I was very unsure in the beginning,

because I wasn’t from (that) background and I was Head...

So I went into the first meeting...

I remember [my boss] coming in and saying,

“Can you handle the first meeting?

Everyone, this is (Julie) I’m going.”

I said,

“Ok. As you all know I don’t know the first thing about {this area}

and I’m relying on all of you to teach me everything you know;

and they all said

“We will, don’t worry.”

And they did?

They did

and they were brilliant,

and they included me in everything.

They took on every opinion I had and,

even though I’d come from a different background altogether,

they were completely respectful about everything.

They asked my advice on things.

All the time and to this day they say,

“What do you think we should do?”

The Right Person for the Job

...I actually think

that the right people

aren't in the right jobs.

I may be head of department for 5 years

but if something (came) up they'll say

"Oh, she was head of department..."

Rather than looking and saying,

"Ok, is this the right person for this job?"

That's what the decision should be,

not who they know or what they did in the past...

Actually no,

what they did in the past is important,

but it shouldn't be

"They need to move position or we need to create a position."

It should be that if you aren't the right person

then you shouldn't be doing the job...

I'm appalling at some jobs

and I shouldn't be doing them.

Molly

She is not a part of us

For that first while I'd say

the staff were looking at me going,

"Who is she?"

And why is she here?

Why would anyone decide

to put her here,
because
she hasn't the background.
Is there integrity to giving her the position?
Will she be able to represent us,
and promote us
and fight for us?"

"Because she's not part of us."

It's Relative

The academic staff have the view
that head of department isn't too bad,
but upper management is the pits.
Yeah, so it's relative.
It's relative how bad we are
rather than relative how good we are.
Yeah, if you're a manager then it's "how bad are you?"
There isn't a perspective on 'good.'
There isn't a perspective on good.

Why is that?

I don't think I've ever had an experience
where someone has come and told me,
"You've done that job well."
Why is that?
Why is it that academic staff
don't see heads of department as humans?

Why is that?

That's the question I ask myself all the time.

because I remember... managing a review process

and –

A difficult, long, process.

And and putting together a really long document,

which I thought was really good.

I didn't get one single compliment

about that being good, bad or indifferent!

I have had exactly the same experience –

Nothing.

I gathered the document

more or less myself

and went into two days of a panel

and 90% of the conversation was by me,

and 90% of the presentation was by me,

and I had staff who...

vaguely turned up

just to be there,

and didn't contribute.

They never turned to me and said,

"Y'know, that was a great document. Well done."

One person did, one.

I must confess.

One person.

But why is that?

Is it Mothers that stay longer?

I do think they tend to put women into it because...

I'm the person that's stayed the longest,

and I was the only woman.

I'm the only female head... that they've ever had

and I'm the one that has stayed in it the longest

who stuck with it.

I've stayed longer than any other head of department.

And I'm the only woman.

And they were the staff that I had most difficulty

with since I took over the job.

People who were previous heads of department

and didn't stick it.

They ran out of it.

Because they couldn't stick it.

It was clearly articulated by them that they left it

because they couldn't put up with it.

But they're the people I've had most difficulty with in the position.

So do you think there was a bit of resentment around the fact that you were sticking it out?

Oh I'd say so, yeah,

because I was showing them up as people that couldn't...

and they were men and I was a woman.

They've learned, upper management,

that women stay longer

in head of department roles

than men.

If you put a woman in there

she's going to stay longer.

She's going to stick at it
and "I'll have less work"
and "I'll have less headaches"
And "I'll have less work to do."
Especially {if it's} a mother.

"I'm not going to give in. I'm going to make this work because I've committed to it."

Is there, is that partly kind-of a woman trying to survive
in a kind-of-a male dominated environment?
Or is it just a personality trait, where {I} wouldn't let go of it?
Until the bitter end.
There might be a bit of that,
whether it's personality or the 'woman' thing.
I was never going to let go of it.
I was going to stay till the end,
"I'm going to finish"
I'm going, the very day I was meant to finish.
It would be interesting to even look at,
"Is it mothers that stay longer in head of department jobs?"

Is it something like caring?

*Is it something like caring?
A desire to make sure that the impact of your leaving wouldn't be...
too much for the people that are under your care?
I mean that's almost like the 'mothering' role again.
It's the least disruptive...*

There probably is, because... in the last few weeks,
when {he} sent out the email to say that he was taking over
he just rang me that morning to say "I'm sending that out."

That was the first I'd heard of it,
and he was saying "I'm taking over."
I never knew he was taking over until he...
rang me and said that.
And HR never told me that I was finishing {then}.
I – I was a consequence to {his} decision
when he was coming back,
my leaving –
And my reaction was very protective.
Which was probably the mothering thing,
or maybe it's me the person?
But I felt very protective of the department.
Kind of 'mothering' of the department,
probably.
And when he said to me,
"We'll meet for a handover, over coffee",
when I met him the following day in the corridor
and I thought,
"Does he think that we can do a handover in half an hour
while we're eating a scone, and drinking a cup of coffee like."
I was... I was insulted by that.
I was insulted by it actually,
and I thought
"They deserve more."
For an ease of transition.
There was a protective –
there certainly is the protective thing alright.

Squeezed from the top and the bottom

It's a 'them' and 'us'.

We're in the sandwich and we don't know what direction to go in.

We feel like we're squeezed from the top and the bottom,
and we're this thing in the middle.

And sometimes it's a massive crisis of identity.

I don't know,

I don't know what it is I'm supposed to be!

I'm sent out like the soldiers in Gallipoli,

to face the troops...

to be the human interaction,

to do the operation;

and then I'm almost instructed how to do that –

and if that goes against what I would naturally do,

I find that very difficult.

At some stage down the line, it may not happen, but –

is it a kind of naïve belief that eventually

people will see the benefit of having...

these personal skills?

Y'know, I often feel like... it's what I think I'm good at.

It's... it's a set of skills that I think are massively undervalued.

But why do we care?

But why do we care ?

[I'm asking loads of questions but you're making me think]

but why do we care if they like us or not?

Is it a female desire to be liked?

Are we weird to {want} to be liked?

Men wouldn't give a damn...

a lot of the men wouldn't care
whether they're liked or not.
Are we weird to be nice,
are we weird to {want to} be liked?
Are we weird to be polite?
Are we weird to behave in a certain way because we're [girls]?
If we want to be liked...
does it come back to the justification...
for not being at home.
That we want to be in an environment
where people think,
"Yeah you're great.
You're doing a great job.
I really like you."
That's a reason to be here,
because we're having a positive effect
on other people.
And it gives us justification.
Because there's circumstances
that we can't mother...
to the extent that we would like to do,
well... I'm going to go to a job
where I might be able to use those skills
or at least I'm giving something back.
Is it a desire to give, of ourselves?
A desire to give,
or a desire to have some impact,
or to have some purpose to what you're doing.

Spilling into everything

I had become a desperately serious,
weighty person.

It's changed my personality

It just all became about work.

Everything about work.

Anything outside would be,

"How do I fit that in, around work?"

I was bringing it home with me.

It was everything.

It was just, spilling...

Into everything...

The reason I kept going with it

and saying, "I won't give up."

I was saying, "I'll try different things. Is it me?"

Do I not need to change what I'm doing?

So that it's not spilling over?"

And making a change in my personality,

and coming home weekends

and coming home the evenings

and all of that."

Alignment

So I actually had...

a personal coach.

I did that for a couple of months.

A kind of mentoring...

A life coach.

And it did help...
certainly.

But I think a lot of what happened is...
who I am was less in alignment with the job.
Things that would push me over the edge
would be things like
getting calls from upper management
to tell me
I should {vote} a certain way {at a meeting}.
Because I think they thought I'd...
go with them.
And I didn't,
and I didn't,
and it was very difficult to...
I just wouldn't go with them.
I wouldn't vote with them
because I thought what they were doing
was wrong.
A couple of different situations
were completely against my principles.
Do you know what I mean?

And what I did in the life coaching-thing was...
what it says really about your work and your personal life
is that the closer aligned your personal values are
with what you do for a living
the happier you're going to be in the role.
So if your personal values can be lived out

in your work environment,
then you're going to be happier –

You get satisfaction.

You get satisfaction, yeah.

Or you can create opportunities for that alignment,
and there was less and less opportunities for that...

because I was being comprised kind-of all over the place.

Infected by it

It became kind of toxic,
or I was being kind-of infected by it...

The job was... doing nothing for me.

I wasn't getting any satisfaction;
except a wage packet at the end of the month, really.

Just coming in, doing it,
in a robotic kind-of-a-way, y'know?

"I have to go on, I have to go in. I have to what I have to do.

I have to do it all day, and I have to do it every day Monday to Friday."

Becoming monotonous, repetitive.

I have to do it at the weekend,
and I have to listen to that one all day,
or to that other one moan and groan
and deal with it.

That grievance, and that complaint,
and what is it all about?

How do I justify it?

Why am I sacrificing being at home with my children?

And not just being at home with them, but...

when I am at home with them I'm thinking,

“I need to be doing something else”

Which is the work.

So that even that time was compromised –

I wasn't present, everything was compromised.

Everything!

My marriage, my children, my friendship, relationships.

Everything.

Everything

was compromised by the job,

because of the demands of the job,

in terms of the workload, but also...

I was being... infected by it.

Infected by it...

Transformational Leadership

Would that have been some of the reason why you might have gone into it?

To change to have an impact...

to... do better?

It got to the point that I'd had enough of it {lecturing}

and needed something different to justify why I was there.

I needed the challenge.

Do you think it's a job that could have an impact,

if it was properly supported?

I think I did have an impact, but I think it was...

more in a general way –

I think I'm more suited to a leadership role

than I am to a management role.

I think I have those ingredients,

that I have this...
transformational leadership style.
I have that intense professional will.
It's just in me.
I have to do things
the best I can possibly do them,
with integrity.
That's of sort of in me.
it's just who I am.
Mixed with humility –
that's what they say is a transformational leader.
So I can say when I've messed up,
I've no problem saying that,
"I fucked that up."
"I was wrong."
I think that kind of leadership does have an impact.
I think it had an impact.

An Honourable Head

There were people who I suppose were negative
and quite difficult to deal with at the start,
but I think that when they saw that ...
I was pushing to make things better
and to raise the standard.
I think people grew to respect me.
Even having the lunch
and there wasn't one lecturer that wasn't there,
and someone came in who was retired,
and {one who} was out on maternity,

they all came.

That's very nice! I have to say that's a very... nice experience.

And people were very...

when I said I was resigning

I heard from everybody.

Either came into the office

or sent me an email and

said they were "disappointed" and...

I got very positive feedback.

I haven't heard any negative feedback,

even though I didn't agree with people...

I think that's very good.

I got a nice email from someone who I had difficulties with him...

he said that he used the word "honourable",

he said that I was an "honourable head of department."

Which was...

that was probably the most...

when I heard all that stuff in the last few months I kind of said,

"Jesus maybe the job is more aligned with who I am than I thought"

I'm Not Myself

When I come in here...

I'm not myself

I'm bland.

My individualism is gone,

the things that I think...

That's what happened to me.

My very first interview

and I look {back} at that person

*and think,
“Who is she?
Where has she gone?”
I was confident,
I was strident,
I smiled a lot.
I knew my worth –
I spoke about myself...
that’s value,
that’s what I have done in the past.
This is what I can do for your organisation...
At {a} recent one I’ve done
I remember somebody saying from the panel,
“And are you ready for this?”
and I remember thinking...
I actually said the words out loud,
“I think I am.”
And at that moment I realised
“Well I’m not going to get this job.”
Because... years ago I would have said
“Yes I am.”
But my... confidence has dissipated.
It’s not there.
That girl that came –
I was a girl,
I can’t remember what age I was -
I had enthusiasm,
knowledge of my abilities,
not overly so but confident –*

quietly confident.

*And I would express it, and I feel that –
that there's been an erosion.*

Like there's been...

bits and bits {being} constantly eroded

and you just seem to become

a ghost or a shadow...

Keeping it all ticking over

How have things changed for you, for the better?

*Is it a different experience, or is it so different altogether
it's almost unrecognisable to the one you had before?*

It is a different experience.

What's dissipated, I suppose,

is the direct management... of staff.

Responsibility, that's gone.

It is a good thing...

I don't have that constant demand

of unexpected kind of stuff coming up.

Y'know, you could have a plan for the day

and the whole thing is thrown out because some staff have an...

... issue

Or else you're working with staff

who don't want to work with you

and all that goes with {that}

That draining thing...

It's lifted because I don't think it was for me, really.

I don't think it suited me actually managing staff.

I don't think it suits many people.

Because some people are very good at it

They thrive on it, but it's not for me.

Managing large numbers of people...

You can't manage them.

You can't manage them.

They're all independent.

They're all autonomous.

So... you're trying to facilitate the working environment

for all of these people

to make sure their day goes well,

but in the meantime your day... is almost...

The head of department role is kind of a facilitator role.

You're just facilitating the department to run,

and you are...

sacrificed in that as a person,

and as a professional, really.

As a human being.

As a person.

You're kind of robotic. You're just...

making it all happen, mechanically...

kind of technically.

Like something behind a computer just...

Keeping everybody happy...

The priorities of keeping all of them happy.

So that it'll all tick...

But less of the priority of yourself, really...

because you're kind of at the mercy of it.

That's how I felt.

I was at the mercy of the department

I don't carry anything home with me...

I don't carry anything home with me now.

I don't bring a bag home with me.

You don't answer emails at night?

I think a big part of it is the (different) role,

but another part of it is that

I've had a bit of time to, kind of,

step back and say,

"I'm not going to do it."

I'm making a determined decision

that it doesn't...

spill over

I mean I could do stuff at home... y'know,

it's there to be done.

There's work that has to be done,

and it could come into my weekends

and all that, but I just...

So you've taken control of that.

It probably was just having that bit of space

from the other job,

of being at the mercy...

of everything

and have a bit of space to,

kind of say

"God almighty", d'y'know?

A head of department job nearly forces you to –

you have to do the stuff at home or
it won't get done.

It just won't get done, you see.

That's the problem...

And it's urgent stuff, -

It's urgent!

It's stuff that you actually can't put off.

Can't put off.

Like a bad dream

How mad was it.

How mad was it.

It was like a bad dream.

I'm still living in that bad dream...

I don't know when I'm going to get out of it –

Something I could contribute to

You're happy in the place you are.

(It's) not without its challenges

but, they're overcomeable.

It's a better role for me, I think.

"Well that's actually something I could really contribute to."

It is a testament to an organisation

that it (can) actually put

the right person in the right job.

Because sometimes that isn't always the case.

Someone with the vision and energy,

and passion,

*is in the right place...
for the right reasons.*

*And that vision, energy and passion
might carry you through the challenges.*

Looking back you're able to say,

"Look, the head of department role just wasn't really for me."

"This is for me, I think I have something really good to offer here."

It's more for me, it's more aligned for me...

Coming back to yourself

And do you feel yourself coming back to yourself a bit now?

Having had that bit of space, that breathing space now?

Yeah, I suppose.

I never lost, kind-of, my principles, really.

Y'know, but they weren't... upfront.

Whereas I feel now they're, kind-of, coming back.

I'm not as compromised by my staff, let's say,

because I don't have staff anymore to kind of... compromise me.

But... your principles, your direction, your vision, your ethos;

they're yours now,

and you can own them ...

I'm not being as compromised...

with so many academic staff pulling out of you really...

you're at the mercy of them, really.

The large numbers and the different personalities,

and the fact that they're unmanageable.

Like I would have used the description

-only to my husband -
would I say to him,
that academic staff could
{ } murder every person in the building
and you still couldn't actually...
fire them.
So... there's no point challenging them about...
what they're doing in the classroom
or (if) they're not... showing up to course boards, or...
they're sitting there on their laptop,
and they're at a meeting,
and they're not engaging.
Sure why would you draw it on you?

You cannot rise above it

It's the lack of will at Head of Department level...
because Heads of Department are exhausted.
And I mean physically exhausted.
And mentally exhausted,
and when you're tired...
you just... keep giving in.
(You) go with the flow.
You cannot actually rise above it,
and there's nobody to pull you above it
because you have no...
no backing,
in terms of senior management.
You don't have... somebody who's outside of that going
"Come on. I'm going to sit with you. I'm going to support you."

Rise above it, let's challenge it, let's introduce this policy.

Let's introduce this, this, this, and this."

Because the people above you are...

just not...

not there.

They're not there... there's a massive sense of absence -

There's a vacuum.

It's just a vacuum at senior level, and then at

the Head of Department level it's exhaustion

and you...

you become siloed in your own department,

and you're lurching from one crisis to the next -

You've become reactive,

You're just reactive.

You just react.

So to think... together,

to support each other

and to re-instill some sense of control

over what's happening on a day to day basis

you haven't even the time to think about that.

No.

Even though the long-term benefits would be –

would get you out of it.

But you don't have the headspace to do that.

No, you haven't got the head space to even think that far ahead...

You're not allowed to have the headspace

because you're left with so much responsibility on a reactive...

kind of a day to day basis.

It just isn't possible.

An uphill battle

I've lost... the weight of responsibility of managing staff, let's say ...

but it certainly is a challenge working in the other direction.

I thought I knew how things worked as a Head of Department...

but how things work at senior management is another story altogether.

So there is... certainly my experience (has been) an uphill battle....

"Why are you asking that? Why do you want to know that?"

Why would it have anything to do with you?"

There was certainly a kind-of-a...

A feeling that maybe I'm stepping on toes.

Encroaching on their space?

I'm certainly stepping on toes, yeah.

Not intentionally.

I'm not doing it to kind of upset people,

but people are upset.

By my questioning.

You see if things have been done the same way

year in,

year out,

decade in,

decade out.

The same things done...

The same things often just don't necessarily yield results.

We need to be changed,

and change isn't easy.

Fractured

I've upset people by simply just being.

Because I'm asking questions and I'm saying,
"We need to work together",
and I'm saying
"You need to work with somebody else.
You need to collaborate."
We can't work on our own.

*When I take a step back
and I look back at different times,
I actually think there was a time...
that that was done.
People did work together.
And then... it just...
things fractured
and for a combination of reasons.
Not necessarily down to a particular set of personalities ...
maybe just simply down to...
the recession kicking in;
the... landscape documents;
the embargos....*

It was a storm gathering moss.
*Y'know, we lost some really good will
amongst some of our very good staff.*

And... the management approach,
Senior management are filling in spreadsheets
and sending them back to the HEA...
down to the last unit cost.
Everybody now is in a kind of pressurised zone.

*And, as a result, we're not...
working coherently.
We have fractured.
But nothing that couldn't healed,
and nothing that couldn't be cemented together.
I'm positive. I would still remain positive;
but it isn't... easy.*

It is because I'm a woman?

*And is that because I'm a woman
I think that's not fair?
It's not the right thing to do?
I could just walk away and not do it, but it wouldn't sit easy with me.
It's very hard sometimes to just shut down and say,
"I'm not going to do this. I'm on my holidays." -
But you don't because...
when you're dealing with human beings you just are...
because you're a human being yourself,
you have empathy for how that feels...
to be on the receiving end,
to be treated like –
that.
Well I can't do that to somebody else.
It's very hard to do.*

Snatching time

*Even colleagues of mine who are doing PhDs and are male
they can dedicate whole Saturdays in the library.
I can't dedicate a Saturday to the library because I have...*

something to do. I have, y'know, I can't do that.

When I have conversations...

with a (male) colleague of mine I think,

"Wow, that's just a completely different experience to mine

because I have to snatch hours.

I have to snatch time."

Overarching Responsibility

But you see for a mother they...

no matter what way we twist it,

they have the overarching responsibility for everything to do with the parenting.

Everything.

Whether we take that on and insist on it, or we're left with it,

I don't know how all that happened,

but... that is the case.

That is the case.

Deirdre

Grounded

My professional background....

(I work)

... during the holidays and every third weekend...

I worked over Christmas, for example.

You're... obviously staying very grounded to your original profession.

Absolutely.

You're very rooted in that.

Absolutely.

If I was sitting here and I didn't have a view of ...

I... don't know how I'd be the manager of this programme.

What does that bring to you, to your day job?

Perspective.

Perspective, grounding, realism.

I wonder do men take those kind of decisions?

I went into education because,

well I was a lone parent,

so therefore I had to find something

that would allow me...

to do this, y'know?

And I wonder do men make those kind of decisions—

do they go into teaching for that reason?

I wonder, do they?

I don't know.

*Well I have a brother, for example, who –
who was in computing for a long time
and he decided to go into teaching,
and as soon as he got the opportunity
to go for, eh, management
he did.*

In a very short space of time...

Y'know...

as soon as the opportunity arose.

I take my holidays

Well I take my holidays.

I take my holidays,

because I have no choice.

I have to.

I'm very clear about that -

but I use it for me –

Now I'm here, and I'm in and out pretty much

Oh me too. On the emails!

On the emails but I'm not –

physically in the building.

Space

It can take – it has taken... three years now I'm here.

This is my – it'll be my third year in April,

but I have taken time out in between that ...

if I hadn't taken that time out I wouldn't be here.

Oh I would be the same...

I have taken two periods of leave.

Space.

Just to get headspace. My dad –

my mum had died and I was looking after my dad,

but... the last was a parental leave

that I had just decided I absolutely had to take.

...

Just, it was crisis management from one week to the next.

And like that I realised that if I didn't take that time

it's very unlikely that I'd be here today.

I think I would have walked away from it,

if I hadn't had a chance to take that time.

Shoulder to the Wheel

It's a very nice department. People are very hard working, mostly.

There's one or two people that don't work hard... and...

there'd be often times that people may – who –

who are more involved with the union and stuff like that,

and bring up those issues at meetings, and things like that.

But generally everybody else is shoulder to the wheel

and tries to push as hard as they can,

and they are really, really, very positive...

When I put my head up and look at what...

other people are dealing with... I have a really...

cushy situation here;

despite the fact that I say I find it a burden and everything like that.

I couldn't do what everyone else does...

On an individual level they're exceptionally positive people.

I suppose what really drains us is
sometimes you've got an occasional student who...
who drains everybody.
And that drains for all the students.
Those students are marked, and they –
they drain the staff... and everything,
which kind of clouds everyone else's experience.
There's a number of hours that go into, eh, any student.
Yeah, they {can} drain everybody and
then we're kind of blamed for that, but...
y'know, they're all students.
But the good ones are all students too.
And some are more needy and need a more support, and resources.

Talking Shop

But then that homogeneity can ... get us together as well;
maybe it's easier for us to come together.
Well I – I – there are elements of it that I envy.
Having that kind of a group that have more or less similar experience...
Whereas... I would find if I have...
things that are up for discussion,
because we're dealing with 30 people
who have vastly different experiences,
all with something to say, and all very valid.
It means that we can become a talking shop for a very long amount of time!
And all of whose opinions are valid, but...
You are providing a listening ear to 30 different opinions...

*It's very hard to find the room for it,
and then at which point do you become
more autocratic and less democratic?*

And I would tend to be democratic by nature so...

If I ever asked him, he'd be here.

If I ever asked him he'd be here,

If I asked him he'd come walk in the door for me.

He fulfils a certain type of educational support.

Just when I ask, and sometimes I don't really know what I'm missing.

And – therefore I haven't got a load of support, y'know?

So I can ask him very complicated things.

Not that I ever have

because my mind would never stretch to

{these} complications in the first place,

but I'm sure if I had complicated things to ask him

he'd have the answers straight away

and he'd give you the answer.

The bread, the butter and the jam...

So I – I kind of feel like that, um, I feel that the preparation for this role is
that you'd want somebody to mentor you into the culture... to mentor you into
the nuances –

{ } the (administrator) has mentored me

into some of the nuances of how things are run.

So that even that can be challenging in a relationship too,

because in many respects { } been here for a long time.

She has a (different) perspective ...

I – I think there's a difference

between lecturing staff and other staff in the college.

I think other staff in the college sometimes perceive lecturing staff to have the bread and butter and jam,

which in some respects I suppose they have...

And... yet other people work equally as hard with perhaps...

equally intelligent, and (have) capability and creativity

and are seen, in some respects, as the sloggers.

And then –

Not being equal at all! Not on any level.

Lecturers might not be as capable

as the people who are there full time

and not getting paid a fraction...

And yet, at the same time, then –

there's always this tension between myself and (the administrator) ...

It's always like a triangle...

The administrators generally would give the impression that,

y'know that there's always too much given to lecturing staff

and so there's also me in the middle trying to, kind of,

act as an arbitrator...

Contrived

So there's a certain responsibility on me as well.

An ethical responsibility that... to be part of that management team;

We were told that the management meetings were contrived,

but sure anyone would know that?

You wouldn't need to be informed of that,

as if it was news.

But however, I – I did have to go home and think

“Yeah I know they're contrived,

and I still go

and I suppose if I'm still going

am I not participating in the contriving?"

Enabling the... the contriving approach to it?

I'm contributing to it.

I'm taking responsibility for contributing to it

because I'm ethically aware of it...

sitting there contributing.

And it's very hard sometimes when you leave the room to say,

"Right, ok, I didn't say anything this time. I should've put my hand up"

and I have on occasion done that.

I have put my hand up on quite a few occasions and...

I wouldn't dare.

I can tell you some days I feel strong enough to do it;

and other days I don't.

I've learned not to do it if I'm not feeling right up it.

I don't do it unless I'm absolutely confident that...

personally I want to be able to take it when I walk out of the building.

Sometimes I feel strong and sometimes I don't.

I waiver in between the two, but I...

I could take it if I wanted. I would have no problem with daggers, at any stage,

and I suppose I'm very much aware of that

but for me if I was going to say something...

It would have to be something that I felt was the right thing,

and I don't know what the right thing is.

That's why I don't say anything, and I wouldn't dare say it

because I don't know what the right thing is.

But if I knew what the right thing is I would be very confident to say it.

Shifting Sands

Understanding the culture of the organisation...

Because cultures in organisations seem to constantly change and move, and shift.

It's like shifting sands underneath your feet.

Y'know no matter how many years you're in the job...

but what I do have is knowledge of what happened before.

I have a confidence in...

"Yeah, I think something like that happened before. I think I can remember."

I remember coming across an incident before,

or a time when this happened before or what was done.

That's something that the experience has given me;

"Ohmygod I am probably one of the longest serving heads."

Does that make me feel more competent? Absolutely not.

No, and that makes me question do you ever feel –

can you ever feel competent in this job?

Is it the kind of job that allows you?

Clearing the decks

It's very hard to clear the decks!

That's the problem.

That's the problem with this job.

It's very hard to clear the decks.

I had decided now this is the week

that I would kick back into everything, but sure here I am –

I came in this morning and I had about 20 emails -

But there are ways – more effective ways, I believe.

And what you think they would be?

Ok I think one of the things I think,

I'm timetabling the staff here...

according to a traditional path, but

I think that I need to start uhm...

giving people space

to do coordination roles.

The problem with that – I end up coordinating,

we're not... we're not given the room to do that.

Well I might take a decision, regardless –

I will be allocating people hours to –

to run with things,

because I can't do it.

I just haven't got the space to do it.

Goose that lays the golden egg

The only way I'm going to get as far as that is

by getting the support from my – the team,

and having that support.

Not that their backs are to the wall all the time,

being excessively busy –

Teaching, teaching, teaching.

I believe there are members within this department

who work really hard...,

I'm stunned at the consistent commitment that people have ... to the job
and I think that they have embraced issues by {taking} on challenges
that they needn't bothered to have taken on.
... they needn't be doing anything like that.

We need to start looking at, uh,
How {money} is funnelled—
because if the members of this department
are willing to work hard...
if they are bringing in surplus money
then that surplus money has to be realised
because people will get burned out.
And people are getting burned out.

Then (if) it's the goose that lays the golden egg,
then that goose needs to be fed
and needs to be supported.

Did I create that monster myself?

*When do you actually – do you prioritise
a time in the morning or a time in the evening
to answer emails?
I find that I'm answering them nearly all day,
every day,
and that someone almost expects
an immediate response
from an email!*

If you don't respond immediately
an hour later they're asking
"Why haven't you responded?"
Actually that's funny because I'm nuts!
I don't respond and I just take (time)...
like this morning I was going through some stuff
and emails I hadn't responded to from April.
So I'm that far back.

I'm going to learn from you.

It's kind of funny actually, because... uh,
some of the staff would have said to me...
that they appreciate the fact that I don't appear
to make quick decision, and that they...
Often time that's because I just haven't got round to the emails.
So these things do resolve themselves...
*You'll find if you leave something alone...
it will actually...*

Yeah, resolve.

*It's to get that balance between being over anxious
and responding too quickly, not being too rash,
and at the same time making sure that {things} happen y'know.
Whereas I find that... maybe because I do respond quite quickly,
and I – I move fairly fast on things,
that maybe I have created a very dependent staff
who expect me to be the one to move on it.*

Everything now happens through me,

and if I don't then...

it's not being done.

It won't happen at all.

I wonder,

Did I create that monster myself?

Whose minding who?

People are getting burned out.

They are.

I suppose then our role is to hold back that tide

and to support the teams that are willing, and giving...

It's all we can do is try to support them and –

and supporting them helps us to {help} ourselves because –

What I've come to realise

is the only person that's going to support me

is myself.

There really isn't anybody else

that's going to look out for me.

Unless I'm willing to do that myself,

and I think I – I have learned.

You hear it all the time

the narrative we hear

about mental health,

and mindfulness,

and minding yourself

but I've really come to the conclusion...

That you absolutely do have to look out for yourself

*because there really isn't anybody –
there isn't anybody
minding...
You.*

So what are we really?

*The bit that I find hard to do
to mind myself
is the lack of control
we're not...
we don't have –
there's no carrots and there's no sticks.
There's nothing we can incentivise staff with,
and there's nothing we can say
to somebody that's not performing –
you're not performing.*

We don't have that {power}.

So what really are we?

*We're facilitators...
what I see myself as is a facilitator.
Channelling.
Channelling other people,
making sure that we're ...
{creating} an environment so that they can do their job...*

But who's creating the environment so that we can do ours?

Filling Spaces

And then I try to fill all these spaces.

*I'm spreading out to fill all these vacuums,
then the person suffering is myself...*

You're spread too thin.

*Too thin, and trying to cover too many things,
and then things {fall} through the cracks.*

Many a thing doesn't get done -

*And it's hard to know what to prioritise
and what not to prioritise,*

There's no shortage of work.

It's never ending.

There's no shortage of work.

Appendix 5

Table Background preparation for First Round Research Interviews December 2015

Interview to be Informed by the literature on women in management and leadership in HE (Morley, 2013; Lynch Grummel and Devine, 2012; Devine, Grummel and Lynch, 2011; Billing, 2011; Grummel, Devine and Lynch, 2009; Bilen-Green, Froelich and Jacobsen, 2008).

In particular, this line from Lord and Preston (2009., p. 771)

“There was a mutual interest in feminist research and an interest in leadership experience... (t)his led the initial conversations regarding the experience of moving into and settling in a leadership role as well as intense conversation about the need to ‘survive.’”

Sample discussion topics:

How many years have you been in the organisation? In what areas did you deliver? What sector, if any, were you working in prior to securing a position in the college?

Can you recall when you decided to go for the role of Head of Department (HOD) / Head of School (HOS) and why?

Can you remember the interview itself? Did you feel confident afterwards, happy with your performance?

Was there any induction / training offered when you started as HOD? What were those first few weeks like for you? Can you remember what came your way? Did academic staff drop in to say hello, to welcome you? Did your HOS meet with you? Can you recall what you were feeling in those first few weeks? How did the Admin team react to you? Did you feel like you got support?

Was there a ‘honeymoon’ period for a while? Have you any sense of it wearing off? Was there any one incident that triggered that sense?

What does Academic Management mean to you?

Staff management/ facilitation; Programme management; Student management; Advocacy for the Department; New Programme development. Is there, should there be a strategic role?

Have you found the time or received the support to engage in that?

How long were you/ have you been a Head of Department? Can you recall particularly difficult periods? What made them difficult? Can you recall particularly good periods and on reflection, what made them good?

Do you consider that you receive/ have received enough support in your role? How did / does that make you feel?

Do you feel that you are / were empowered as a Head of Department/ Head of School in the organisation to effect/ bring about change? Do you think the role (as you held it) had the capacity/ power to bring about change? Where do you think the power lies in the academic organisation? (Is there room for it to be shared, and would that be a good thing?)

I am conducting this research as a way of understanding gendered organisational practices in higher education. In the literature, the milieu of higher education has been referred to as 'a chilly climate' (Morley, 2014) one with maybe fewer opportunities, a hostile culture for women and outdated work practices. Would you agree with this statement?

Do you think that your experiences as a Head of Department / Head of School were different to those of a male Head of Department in the organisation?

Was there a sense of a network of support amongst your female colleagues/ peers? Did that help you in your work? Do you think that there was a similar male network? Do you feel that you were treated differently by lecturing staff because you were a female in management?

Why did you choose to get out of academic management in the organisation (if you did)? Can you remember what prompted it? And how did you feel when you made the decision? Where have you / are you going from here? Are you happy with your decision now? Would you consider going back into management at some point again in the organisation / in your new organisation? Why?

A performance-based narrative inquiry into the gendered experiences of women in academic leadership in Ireland.

1. Participant Information Sheet

What is the project about?

This project is concerned with the career experiences of women in academic leadership in Ireland, with a particular focus on the impact of the gendered institutional environment in the higher educational sphere on these experiences.

Who is undertaking it?

My name is () and I am an academic Head of Department at an Institute of Technology. I am currently undertaking a PhD at Mary Immaculate College of Education and I intend to base my doctoral thesis on this research study. My supervisor's name is Dr. Dorothy Morrissey, who is a lecturer in drama education at MIC.

Why is it being undertaken?

Senior management in higher education is disproportionately male. The gendered educational and institutional environment can create an unequal playing field, favouring the advancement of men. Furthermore, in recent years, there has been considerable research on the pervasive culture of 'new-managerialism' that has swept into the higher education sector in the last ten years, which emphasises a leadership culture which has seen women's value become devalued and misrecognised.

What are the benefits of this research?

It is hoped that through a process of narrative inquiry, both the participants and the researcher can explore the gender narratives embedded in the shared stories of our experiences. Narrative inquiry can provide a way of understanding and learning from the experiences as women operating in a male-dominated milieu. It is hoped that this understanding and awareness will benefit not only the participants and the wider research community, but also women in academia who aspire to leadership.

The data representation will be in the form of a play, to be conceived, written and performed by the researcher, and as such, the project also aims to create an original performance work.

Exactly what is involved for the participant (time, location etc.)

The participants will be interviewed at times and locations agreeable to them. There may be more than one individual interview, and there may be at least one group interview with the other participants, during the course of the data collection phase.

The data representation will be in the form of a playscript, to be conceived, written and performed by the researcher. During the process of devising the play, participant feedback may also be sought and an invitation to attend at a public performance may be extended.

Right to withdraw

Participation is entirely voluntary. The participant has the right to withdraw from this research project at any time, without any consequences and without providing any reason for doing so.

How will the information be used/disseminated?

The data collected during this research study will be utilised solely for my doctoral thesis, and the creation of an original, staged performance piece.

How will confidentiality be maintained?

All information gathered will remain confidential and will not be released to any third party. All names and locations will be anonymised and disguised in all field notes and in the final research text. Composite characters, locations and events will be developed for the purposes of the playscript to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality.

What will happen to the data after the research has been completed?

In accordance with the MIC Record Retention Schedule 2013, all participant data will be stored for the duration of the project plus three years, after which it will be destroyed.

Contact Details

If at any time you have any queries or issues with regard to this study, my contact details are as follows:

Aisling Sharkey @ (mic student email address)

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:

MIREC Administrator

Mary Immaculate College

South Circular Road

Limerick

061-204515, mirec@mic.ul.ie

2. Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant

As outlined in the *Participant Information Sheet*, the current study is concerned with the career experiences of women in academic leadership in Ireland and will involve participating in an agreed schedule of interviews, as well as participation in the process of devising a playscript based on the text of the interviews.

Your confidentiality will be assured by the use of anonymised names and locations in all field texts, and the use of techniques such as composite characters and events in the playscript.

Please read the following before signing the consent form:

1. I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet**.
2. I understand what the project is about and that the collected data will be used to create a playscript, which may be performed in public.
3. I know that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without consequence.
4. I am aware that all data collected as part of this research project will remain confidential and that composite characters and events will be created for the playscript.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Conferences and Presentations

Poster Presentations

Spinning Stories, Weaving Wor(l)ds – tales of the lived experiences of women in leadership roles in Higher Education in Ireland.

- 6th Annual Limerick Postgraduate Research Conference, Limerick Institute of Technology, 24th May 2017.
- Doctoral Research in Education Annual Conference: People, Perspectives & Places, University College Dublin, 27th May 2017.

Conference Presentations

'Performing Lives' – a researcher's ambition to stage the lived experiences of women in leadership roles in Higher Education in Ireland.

- 'Life History and Life Writing Research: Critical & Creative Approaches', University of Sussex, June 16th 2017.

'A bad hair day' – performing the understory of women in academic management in higher education in Ireland.

- 'Narrative Neo-Liberalism in and Irish Context', 4th International Irish Narrative Inquiry Conference, IT Sligo, April 19th/ 20th, 2018.

'Learning to listen to self – a researcher's experiences with narrative interviewing.'

- Abstract accepted for the peer -reviewed ESREA 'Togetherness and its discontents', Life History and Biography Research Network Conference, March 1st- 4th, 2018 in Turin, Italy⁴⁰.

'Being there' – an (auto)ethnographical representation of the 'understory' of being a woman in Higher Educational Management in Ireland.

- 'Leading, leaders and leadership in Schools, Community and Society, International Research Methods Summer School Meeting Series, 25th May, 2019.

Certified attendance at the **University of Groningen Winter School, 2019**

'Narrative Values, the Value of Narratives', the LACE network, Institute for Cultural Research Groningen, University College Groningen.

⁴⁰ Unable to attend due to Storm Emma.