Images of Headship

A narrative inquiry into the construction of identities for Headteachers in all girls' selective independent schools.

Submitted by Caroline Ann Pascoe, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GSA	Girls' Schools Association
AHM	Association of Headmistresses
ISC	Independent Schools Council
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Head teachers
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
Ofsted	Office of Standards in Education
ISC	Independent Schools Council
BERA	British Educational Research Association
HMC	Headmasters and Headmistresses' Conference
DfE	Department for Education
ISI	Independent Schools Inspectorate
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
UK	United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration into how Headteachers, in all-girls' selective independent schools, construct their professional identities with the aim of gaining an insight into what it is like to be a Headteacher within this context. Whilst there is significant literature concerning leadership, and the concept and process of identity construction, there is little discernible research which explores the experiences and organisational socialisation of Headteachers within this specific context. Therefore, this research contributes significantly to the body of knowledge by studying female Headteachers leading all-girls' selective independent schools.

This study took a narrative inquiry approach to examine the process of socialisation involved in the construction of Headteacher professional identities. Photographic images were used in narrative conversational interviews with four Headteachers; this resulted in interview data which was explored and interpreted for emerging 'themes' and 'signs'. Analysis was informed by theoretical themes developed within communities of practice literature (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The framework of 'communities of practice' was used because it underpins personal development and learning as well as the process of socialisation and hence the forming of professional identities. The underlying assumption is that the formation of professional identities occurs via participation and engagement in a context and a community of practice specific to these Headteachers.

The themes, that were applied and emerged from the narratives, manifested themselves within the Headteachers' stories as 'signs'. Once these signs were identified within the narrative transcriptions, they were analysed for dynamic

connections between the signs in order to build what I refer to in this study as ‘identities construction plots’.

The findings of this study suggest that the process of socialisation and the construction of a Headteacher’s identities within leadership communities of practice are complex, multifaceted and influenced by many sociocultural and contextual aspects. The concept of a core identity with varying degrees of agency and conformity will be shown to play a part. However, the issue of negotiating multiple identities will also be shown to have caused uncertainty and a potential lack of confidence amongst these Headteachers.

Although it is not possible to suggest generalisations from these findings, due to the small number of participants and the personalised nature of the data, the study will be of value to practitioners, educationalists and policymakers. This in-depth and insightful interpretation of the Headteachers’ construction of identities provides colleagues with examples from which they could begin to question, and reflect upon, their own practice and actions within their leadership role.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: when it all began

There is increasing evidence that the quality of leadership is paramount to achieving and sustaining high standards of education in schools (Day & Leithwood, 2007). Based on this claim, Colley (2014) identified leadership behaviours that involved establishing a clear school vision and culture; developing a professional identity and creating strong community relationships as a vehicle for achieving educational aspirations. Kinnucan-Welsch (2007) went further by suggesting that leadership professional identities, developed within communities of practice through organisational socialisation, contribute significantly to the performance of a school. This thesis has built on these claims by seeking to understand how the Headteachers, participating in the study, constructed their professional identities through the process of socialisation between their context - an all-girls' selective independent school - and their communities of practice.

We are currently in a period of significant educational change and reform which is adversely impacting upon the ability to provide high-quality leadership for schools in all sectors (Crawford, 2014). Despite the above assertions by Colley (2014) and Kinnucan-Welsch (2007), the research and professional development focus throughout this change has been on the nature and extent of school leaders' competencies and skills with less attention placed on the rationale and motivation for how individuals perform their leadership role. Crawford (2014) argued that studying professional identities of school leaders would enable us to get in touch with the individual's passion, commitments, and shortcomings which are all important considerations which can influence the practice of educational leadership. This study

is therefore important as it examines the issues affecting Headteachers today and sheds light on the complexity of their professional contexts and identities. The thesis has resulted in proposals being made, in the final chapter, to enhance the understanding of a Headteacher's experiences, as well as identifying practices which could benefit other Headteachers in differing contexts.

The concept of identity has been extensively researched and discussed within the social sciences, with explorations also extending out into educational settings. Hence, it is important to ask what this study can add to this well-researched field? I, myself, am a Headteacher in an all-girls' selective independent school and, in many ways, this study is motivated by my belief that professional identities are a valuable aspect of who I am as a Headteacher and how I, as a person, relate to my school. I wish to commence this thesis by initially presenting and attempting to make sense of my own motivations.

> 'in this age of complexity, the cultivated identity is a leader's greatest tool – it's the journey of a lifetime' Sergiovanni (1992, p.186)

A number of years ago, and new into a headship role, Sergiovanni's (1992) mantra was welcomed with great expectation, for I had long decided that my journey to becoming a Headteacher would involve much more than just honing my skills; and, as a journey, it implies there would be a final destination in my role. However, it was in those early days of developing my Headteacher identities that I abandoned Sergiovanni's journey metaphor as particular key features - such as having a beginning, a final destination, a mode of transport and a specific experience over a period of time - all indicated a possible simplicity of the journey that, in reality, did not fully reflect the complexity of what I was actually experiencing. As a result, I found

solace in Image One.

Image One: depicting being 'stuck in the weeds' (Reflective Diary, 12th May 2012)

"Being new to headship and attempting to understand the undergrowth of academic problems and issues has meant that at times I feel trapped, overtaken, stuck in the weeds and needing to find the flowers and shoots of new growth. The metaphor of gardening was introduced to describe my feelings and how my identities are, at times, overgrown with unwanted concepts, ideas and beliefs. Despite hours of labour to try and clear a visible path, to expose the beauty of the hidden fauna below and to improve the horizon, it seemed that the growth of the unwanted plants outpaced me and left me once more wading through a tangled mass of weeds. They obscure the view, hide the good growth and tease me with their own brightly-coloured buds, hoping that I will desire these flowers and hence keep them to flourish and grow, to love them and thus rely on them. Yet, I feel frustrated that I have to repeat the same actions and worries about why my identities as a Headteacher and a researcher are being obscured, put under pressure and not allowed to be prominent". (Reflective Diary, 4th April 2009).

Driven by a need to learn and acquire knowledge, the folders and resources collected throughout my National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme were placed methodically, and with great deliberation, upon my office shelves. The tomes entitled 'Finances and Management' and 'Accountability and Curriculum Development' looked extremely impressive, giving others visual evidence that I am not only fully committed to my position within the school but also well trained, developed and armed with a complete range of professional skills and knowledge. On the uppermost shelf, the framed certificate should have added to my sense of achievement and satisfaction, indicating to all that I had now entered the realm of an educational leader. Had I indeed not vaulted the hurdle and jumped through the hoops in order to achieve the documentation and evidence that unlocks the door to Headship? Hargreaves (1998) heralded the NPQH as a way to transform and validate educational leadership, which led me to hold high expectations of the course. Sadly, however, the reality of my experiences left me with an inner restlessness and a growing sense that I had not achieved all that I thought I would, or could, potentially achieve.

During the following months, as I tried to implement the course content in my daily managerial and leadership role, I began to realise that I had been part of a "*fast-food approach"* to leadership training. Here, my experiences of the programme were akin to that of a very famous fast food outlet. The course was pre-packaged and made reliable to such an extent that, despite the diversity of customers, we all emerged with the same product, thoughts and ideologies – "*leadership training in a bun"* (Reflective Diary, 7th December 2010).

Mead (1972) describes a process in which a person takes on their identities to act as a generalised other. This process may go some way to describe this concept of *"leadership training in a bun"*. However, whilst I express what it means to be a Headteacher in my context this may differ from how others see me in my role. Hence, it felt that the course had only one view and that was to develop us into the same mass-produced Headteacher within an homogenous and bland community of practice. Thus, I was left feeling hungry and unsatisfied, with an incomplete level of fulfilment but above all a much clearer, and personal, understanding of Isaac's (1995) theory that, even in newly established life-long learning and development programmes for leaders, there is little reference made to addressing the 'true person' (Isaac, 1995, p.37).

It seemed that there was a key piece of knowledge, or experience, missing in the overall flavour of the course. Moreover, it was impossible to recognise what had been in the NPQH for me and how the qualification had aided my inner, personal, transformation. 'Knowing thyself' has been an adage since Aristotle, indeed the experience of working on my own development, and that of others, suggested that the importance of developing the professional identities is part of our professional life-long learning and is as relevant in the 21st century as it was in 400 BC. This is best illustrated by Fullan (1992): 'the starting point for what's worth fighting for is not systems knowledge, not knowledge in others around us, but knowledge in ourselves' (p.59).

The school leaders' role is rapidly changing and becoming more complex; as Headteachers we are expected to continuously adapt, owing to pressures from a

wide-range of diverse educational and business sources and accountabilities (including the rapidly increasing agenda for change imposed by governments (Fullan, 1992; Crawford, 2014)). As a consequence, the preparation and training of school leaders has become a cause of concern, hence, leadership styles and leadership identities have become a major part of this preparation (Bush, 2011). This stance is borne out by Colley (2014) who concluded that there is a need to acquire the necessary skills and identity for a profession by engaging 'particular socially-situated, contextually-embedded practice and learning' (p.4). This suggests that developing a professional identity is a fundamental basis for lifelong learning and continuing professional development as a Headteacher.

As previously noted, identity is an extensively studied concept, particularly in the social sciences where theorisations have expanded rapidly in the past few decades (Bauman, 1990). Ball (2008) points out that significant changes have also occurred in society and that, in particular, the emergence of the self-conscious individual has led to an increased interest in a person's abilities and capabilities. Moreover, the idea of a predetermined life course has generally been replaced by the idea of an individual's 'life project', which seeks to fulfil a person's potential and aims to complete the 'unfinished self' (p.60). Bauman (1990) suggests that this project of becoming was a person's main life task in modern times, where well-established social identities and behaviours were available for engagement (e.g. clearly defined social class and gender roles). These were the desirable end goals towards which self-fulfilling individuals could strive. A similar kind of 'self-realisation discourse' (p.92) and the search for one's true purpose in life is prevalent also in the current post-modern era. However, according to Bauman (1990), post-modernity no longer

offers these well-rehearsed social positions with related identities for people to take on; ‘instead of acting like pilgrims with a clear destination, people are now forced to act like vagabonds trying to find out where to go next’ (p.49). This critique also features readily in feminist literature (where feminists have also taken to further critique notions of individuality in late modernity) and in research carried out by Fuller (2010) which challenges gender as a dualist concept.

In the post-modern world, it is often claimed that everything is in flux, including our identities which are under constant construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. The old familiar and traditional boundaries have been broken down and replaced with temporary barriers which Bauman (1990) concludes lead to the experience of ‘disembodiment’ (p.125) occurring any number of times throughout an individual’s lifetime. Steiner et al. (2012) cited current neoliberal pressures as causing individuals and institutions to be ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ (p.73) in that there is no reliance on wider social structures and influences.

In the midst of all this supposed flexibility and change, individuals are thought to seek and make sense of their lives by trying to locate anchor points, possibly the belonging to a community of practice, which would give them some stability and security rather than achieving and securing particular identities (Colley, 2014). A sense of self and associated identities are something to struggle for, something that needs to be negotiated and constantly reconstructed. Often these struggles result in unwanted outcomes: of feeling lost, depressed and empty (Colley, 2014). Yet this search for stability is combined with a need to live authentically; which means that individuals are pushed to find identities that are right for them, to be true to

themselves, to live fully and completely. In my role of Headteacher I do feel the need for a certain level of stability, coherence and purposefulness, as opposed to uncertainty and fragmentation; so I, too, feel that I am on a similar search to discover who I am in my leadership role and within my community of practice.

One of the main reasons why I wanted to conduct this study was because of the problems which have arisen throughout my career at times of educational change or professional development, where the focus has been on objective and measurable outcomes rather than the consideration of 'me'. Throughout my leadership career, any changes implemented due to educational policy seemed, on many occasions, to be based on minimal understandings of what Headteachers, like myself, appeared to need in terms of professional development. This seemed to me to suggest that policymakers frequently overlook that every Headteacher is undergoing a continuous transformation of their self, a cycle of identity reconstruction, and that any kind of educational reform requires a better knowledge of that individual in order to understand what they consider valuable, and moreover, why they act in the ways that they do.

By sharing my narrative in this way, I hope to have given some insight into my own personal context and, subsequently, an understanding of what shaped the motivation and direction of this research study. Given the realities of my role as a Headteacher and as an emerging researcher, I was initially tempted to research the current dominant educational discourse, that of school improvement - and hence reveal the most effective traits of the identities of Headteachers in successful schools. However, the frustrations which I have mentioned above became the prominent

motivators to carry out this study into an exploration of the construction of identities as a Headteacher. The overriding desire was to understand and interpret other Headteachers' individual narratives and consequently gain an appreciation of the development of my own personal and professional identities. I felt that I was floundering alone; yet if I gained an insight into the narratives of fellow colleagues, I would be more satisfied, become confident and less restless in my role as a Headteacher. This is not something unique to me. Indeed, it was a prominent driver encountered by participants in Acker's (1995) research of female teachers who were negotiating the structural locations of ethnicity, social class, gender and age in order to perform 'success' in their roles (p.25). It was, however, a key driver for this research.

Aims and research questions

This research study is therefore focussed on gaining an understanding and insight into the headship community of practice and to understand further the process through which Headteachers' professional identities are constructed. In particular, the aims of this research were to examine:

- the process of how Headteachers' identities are developed and experienced;
- the various professional and organizational socialisations within their communities of practice, which contribute to the construction of Headteachers' identities (within all-girls' selective independent schools).

In order to meet these aims, I have sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the main factors which have influenced the construction of Headteachers' identities (within all-girls' selective independent schools)?
- How do Headteachers of all-girls' selective independent schools construct

their identities within their ongoing interaction and professional socialisation with their communities of practice?

My thinking on these issues has been greatly influenced by Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory, developed originally from Vygotsky's (1978) theory of identity construction (1978). Using Lave & Wenger's (1991) theory, specific, focussed questions were also generated:

- What aspects of the social interaction within the Headteachers' communities of practice are used for personal sense-making and the construction of identities?
- What is the role of the Headteachers' communities of practice in developing the professional identities?
- What kinds of life-events are used as part of the personal sense-making process in the construction of identities?
- What threatens the construction of identities?

Therefore, this research specifically investigates the life experiences of four Headteachers in all-girls' selective independent schools and explores the sense-making processes which each Headteacher engaged in whilst constructing their identities. The central focus of the research was an investigation of the process of identity construction; however, the nature of the identities is also considered. From the cases of these four participating Headteachers, generalisations will not be sought; rather the narratives will attempt to understand how the individual Headteachers use and interact with their sociocultural environment to construct, maintain and alter their identities and, hence, the construction of self. To understand the current educational contexts for Headteachers, two areas will initially be examined in detail in order to provide background to the study - these are the context

of all-girls' selective independent schools and the role of Headteacher.

The context of all-girls' selective independent schools

Colley (2014) suggested that, in order for individuals to develop professional identities, they need to engage and interact with 'particular socially-situated, contextually-embedded practice' (p. 4). The context of the all-girls' selective independent school environment is therefore significant for this study. The aim of this section then is to briefly clarify, for the reader, the educational context. Appendix One outlines some key features of the specific schools led by the participating Headteachers.

The term 'independent schooling' has become something of a cloudy concept because of recent numerous policy changes. The advent of the government's initiative to further parental autonomy (DfE, 2015) has, for example, given rise to alternative forms of independent schools. These new free schools and academies are independent of local authorities and national curriculum requirements; however, they are still, to an extent, state-funded and inspected by governmental bodies. All the Headteachers participating in this research lead all-girls' selective independent schools which are not state-funded nor inspected by government agencies, as explained below.

Independent schools within the United Kingdom (UK) have been most commonly recognised as those belonging to the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) which originally represented the most prominent all-boys' schools. However, with many all-boys' schools becoming co-educational, the sector

now represents a diverse range of educational institutions which reaches wider than the starting and traditional membership of the HMC. Currently, the independent sector educates only a small percentage of the British school age population with approximately 7% studying at such schools (ISC census, 2016) and only 1% attending all-girls' selective independent schools. These girls' schools are predominantly (but not entirely) represented by the Girls' Schools Association (GSA); 65% of their membership are day schools and 35% offer a variety of boarding packages.

Currently these GSA schools, and other schools which might exist outside of this association, come in many different shapes and sizes. Interestingly, all the Headteachers in this study lead schools that began from philanthropic roots, something which is well documented in the prospectuses of each school. Landed gentry, clergy or localised charities began these schools with the sole aim of providing high-quality education, to broaden the opportunities for young Victorian women and to develop feminine principles (as has been noted by a number of authors, e.g. Delamont, 1989). Today, many of these schools are selective – each school has its own assessment procedures which girls are expected to engage with before entry, as illustrated in Appendix One.

There has been some research conducted upon independent schools abroad, predominantly in the USA, Sweden and Asia (e.g. Dronkers & Robert, 2007; Jackson & Bisset, 2005). Many of the claims made by overseas research are difficult to apply as most independent schools in the UK are considered to have different qualities e.g. a historical, traditional and old-fashioned presence and a stance for quality,

excellence and a firm cultural identity (Jackson & Bisset, 2005). The research conducted on independent schools in the US, for example, has suggested that these schools have entered the realms of neoliberalism, and that the role of headship is centred on the business and the raising of funds (Trickett et al. 1982; latterly, Forbes & Weiner, 2008). In Asia and Singapore research on independent schools has suggested that they might be considered as examination factories (Hunt, 2010). Finally, in Europe, particularly Sweden, research has focused on those independent educational establishments which have trialled new educational initiatives, aimed at solving societal issues and raising standards (Jackson & Bisset, 2005). Therefore, whilst such research gives an insight into some of the wider cultures and practices of independent schooling, a certain degree of caution must be maintained in terms of attempting any sort of comparison. Above all, this research clearly demonstrates that girls' selective independent schools come in many different forms and are by no means identical.

The research conducted on independent schooling in the UK could be considered 'patchy'. Gaztambide-Fernández (2008) points out that independent schools (particularly in the US and UK) have not tended to be studied as closely as state-maintained establishments. This lack of research, according to Jackson & Bisset (2005) and Gaztambide-Fernández (2008), can be attributed to the fact that there is little political will to research high-performing non-government run schools (Hargreaves, 1998). These authors claim that, despite only a small percentage of children attending independent schools, their influence is considerable and 'for good or ill, they remain a potent factor in British society' (p.142).

Some of the educational research which has focussed on the independent sector

has examined outstanding academic achievement, higher levels of student attainment, ‘elitist’ characteristics, and the predominant success criteria of such schools (e.g. Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008; Allan & Charles, 2014; McLay & Brown, 2000; Jackson & Bisset, 2005). Authors have both explored the ‘elite’ culture of these schooling environments and have shed light on the fact that there is some social diversity in these systems. Thus, together, this work has sought to critically examine certain key concepts such as wealth, privilege and power, considered still present within independent schools. Jackson & Bisset’s (2005) and Forbes & Weiner’s (2008) research, in particular, has suggested that girls’ selective independent schools might need to be considered differently from other sectors of education as their culture differs, primarily because of the way in which they were formed.

As well as a difference in the historical development of all-girls’ schools, until recently, it would also have been typical for the Headteacher in such schools, to have been a single female who had been educated in a similar institution (or convent) and at an Oxbridge college. Leading and teaching in an all-girls’ independent school would then have been viewed as a ‘natural’ extension of the sheltered, single-sex, way of life these women had followed since childhood, thus creating unique communities of practice (Delamont, 1989).

Dronkers & Robert (2007) focussed on similarities between all-girls’ and co-educational elite independent schools, for example, that in all these schools a persistent elitist ethos could be identified. This, they suggest, was aided by a strong sense of institutional collective identity due to the academic emphasis and the

advance of ‘character development’. This notion of ‘character development’ comprises ‘obedience, hierarchy, respect, team games, adventure, loyalty and leadership...’ (p.179). Dronkers & Robert (2007) claim that institutional collective identity is stronger within elite independent schools, despite two types of individualism: one where the student has a clear sense of their identity and individuality and is concerned with personal achievement, and another where individualism co-exists alongside group loyalty. Their findings are confirmed by a longitudinal study carried out by Jackson & Bisset (2005) who also concluded that the long-held view that independent education has academic and cultural advantages still prevails. This characteristic is evident in the marketing which exists for girls’ selective independent schools today where it is commonplace for claims to be made about the ‘excellence’ which these schools achieve through keeping young women separate from young men, at times when their influence may have a negative effect.

As a Headteacher within the sector I have recognised that there is a change in the independent school discourse, with a stronger emphasis on student individuality, where the individual identity becomes more prominent than that of the group. Warnock (2005), whilst focussing on the provision of special educational needs, also suggests some unique personality traits of independent school students; traits that are considered to be notably different from the norm in many areas, such as being more outgoing, cheerful and adventurous. Warnock’s characteristics seem to stem from home environments where reason replaces discipline in behavioural control, where self-confidence is actively encouraged (although this is, of course, a highly-debated notion in itself) and where school staff actively reinforce these traits. The

research study in this thesis is unique in that it aims to explore these wider aspects of the sociocultural contexts of the all-girls' selective independent school in relation to Headteachers' identities rather than that of the students.

The role of headship[1]

The purpose, in this section, is to provide a working definition and understanding of educational leadership as a key concept to be used extensively in this study. In spite of the recognised importance of educational leadership, there is still no consensus in the literature as to what leadership actually is or how to define it. Northouse (2009) carried out an extensive review of the literature and four common themes emerged:

- Leadership is a process;
- Leadership involves influence;
- Leadership occurs in a group context; and
- Leadership involves goal attainment.

In an attempt to provide a working definition of educational leadership, this study espouses the above characteristics and proposes that it is a dynamic, intentional and influential process situated in context and distributed among individuals who share common goals and vision for the school; namely communities of practice.

The role of headship has significantly altered and has become a complex and demanding role in the 21st century. Recent conceptions of headship, according to Earley (2013), have distinguished between 'leadership for learning' and 'instructional

[1] The role of the participants of this research, had a variety of names for example, Headmistress, Senior Mistress and Principal. In this study, I have chosen to use the generic term of Headteacher to describe the headship of all-girls' selective independent schools.

leadership' (p. 16). Both models have adopted expectations for Headteachers to bring about school and student effectiveness through a participatory process that embraces all members of the organisation. Gunter (2001) claims that a Headteacher's priority is to build shared meaning systems and mutual commitments among communities of practice. Hence, this study attempts to go some way to understanding how individuals have developed their professional identities as Headteachers and to explore the process of socialisation within their communities of practice.

The historical development of the headship role is outlined by Grace (1995) and has been subsequently highlighted by Hallinger (2005). Both authors show that sociocultural influences have worked powerfully to develop Headteachers' identities only to serve 'his' purpose. Grace (1995) proposes that the powerful and respectful position of the male 19th century Headteacher was to act solely as an agent in constructing a class-controlled reality for those in his charge. Despite changes brought about by late modernity, when so many structures of authority and hierarchies appear to have been undermined, Headteachers within the independent sector frequently have degrees from highly reputable universities, may have attended a well-known independent school themselves and are recruited for academic kudos and traditional values (Hargreaves, 1998). Therefore, I would argue that this powerful positioning, associated with class, still exists within the independent sector and has the potential to shape the communities of practice and, hence, identities of the participating Headteachers.

The Second World War is seen by Grace (1995) as a turning point in the history of

headship in that there was a promise of ‘greater democracy and social justice’ (p.30) which was to offer better opportunities for all and to aim for equality. The Headteacher, as a trailblazing professional, was to lead the modernisation of society, with the promotion of team spirit and an acceptance that the class structure was outdated. Whilst the purpose of the position was still very much prescriptive, Grace suggests a shift in the identities of the Headteacher, and a change of position, as the role became open to people from a broader background who, for the first time, were supposed to be promoted on merit. This era is characterised by a sense of professional knowledge, where the Headteachers became autonomous agents and professionals in defining the direction of the school as long as the government’s policies were followed.

In the 1960s, this developed into the concept of the lead professional (Grace, 1995) – a Headteacher who had the remit to inspire change and reform in a non-prescriptive and non-governmental way. By the end of the 20th century a further shift was made towards that of an entrepreneur, in reaction to the market and business discourse. This grew out of a context of ‘cost-effective education’ (p.86), one which began a large political debate about whether Headteachers should be regarded as administrators or moral leaders. In this era, a polarisation of views, relating to the role of the Headteacher, caused individuals to question the gulf that began to develop between professional and personal identities (Hargreaves, 1998). Coincidentally, at this time, the government wanted to promote the headship role as one of leadership, and subsequently developed an official definition and understanding of leadership by publishing the Teacher Training Agency’s (TTA) ‘National Standards for Headteachers’ (Hargreaves, 1998). These standards were

used as the basis for evaluating the performance of Headteachers and for training purposes provided by the NPQH. These standards were dominated by notions of organisational power, functions and tasks, without reference to professional or personal identities. This suggests that the political stance was to establish accountability and authority, rather than to develop the individual and their identities, thereby reinforcing the belief that education was firmly embedded in the realms of reductionism and positivism based on market growth and business.

This review of the 'National Standards for Headteachers' may suggest that the role has been viewed in a rational and reductionist manner, as policymakers attempt to assign direct correlation with the individual role, school improvement and effectiveness (something initially pointed out by Hallinger & Heck, 2003). Foucault's (1998) concept of power has also been utilised by scholars attempting to make sense of this role. Ryan & Deci (2000) elaborates:

> 'Power gives individuals a general sense of who they are, that is, how they see themselves and others, what they believe in, and how they approach life - power does not act on people from a distance, from the outside, but on the interior, through an individual's self-intervention on social relations.' (p.68)

This quotation from Ryan & Deci suggests that power is experienced by, and is an integral part of the identities of, a Headteacher and guides many of their actions and characteristics. Moreover, it has become more apparent from research into the complexities of school change and development that other subjective factors including power positions, identities and relationships with people are important in guiding, facilitating or inhibiting educational leadership capabilities (Beatty, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004).

Poole (2007) claims that Headteachers are now working in an environment influenced by the powerful discourse and policies of neoliberal governments, where economic growth is considered the sole priority. Alongside Poole and other scholars, it is my educationally-driven belief that this 'marketisation' (p.132) of education could potentially have grave consequences for independent education. Poole's claim suggests that Headteachers might lose a sense of individuality, as they become more conformist and align with external neoliberal agendas. Elaborating on this notion, Mathison & Ross (2008) have asserted that business leaders' values, beliefs and identities are (now) being mirrored (more and more) by educational leaders. The overriding emphasis on 'the bottom line' and positivistic efficiency is considered to have changed the perspective held in schools, and Headteachers are now uniquely situated between the business and education communities. Such positioning requires Headteachers to respond to the commercialism of their schools and has the potential to complicate their existence and the understanding of their identities as educational leaders (Poole, 2007).

The constantly changing role of Headteachers along with increasing demands and expectations being placed on them are also emphasised by Browne-Ferrigno (2003). Headteachers' decisions are becoming ever more constricted as they are required to use national curricula, adhere to inspection criteria and meet ever more demanding standards. Bush (2011) describes this conformity and constriction as 'the rigid, mean-end model of teaching' because of national governments' approaches to education in recent years (p. 716). The overemphasis on narrowly-defined curricula is at the cost of a loss to the status of teachers and hence Headteachers. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) suggests that given the change to externally controlled education,

the difference in how Headteachers respond and how well they manage coping strategies lies in their identities - in their sense of self. Therefore, how a Headteacher views their own identities determines their effectiveness in their leadership role and their professionalism.

Finally, Andrews & Edwards (2008) explored the nature and formation of academic identities within UK universities and how young academics position themselves in relation to the notions of 'authenticity' and 'success'. The research recognised the participants' attempts to become academics; but also, the study highlighted many economic and business conflicts and constraints that prevented or delayed them becoming an academic. Whilst we must be careful in the comparisons that we make across these professions (even though both hold teaching as central to their role), it does appear from this research that these neoliberal pressures are producing different sorts of identities and experiences for those individuals involved.

Potential significance and contribution to knowledge

From my perspective as a Headteacher and a researcher, this study builds upon the claim by Crawford (2014) that studying professional identities of school leaders would enable us to get in touch with the individual's passion, commitments and shortcomings, which are all important considerations which can influence the practice of educational leadership. Both the professional and theoretical implications on the field of school leadership will be addressed in this section.

Colley (2014) claimed that individuals are influenced by their immediate social world, to cultural factors and important others in their personal and work lives; it is these

that cause ongoing development of a person (which includes their identities). Hoare (2006) also stressed that the contexts that are closest to a person exist as a multiple network of settings that also define an individual's roles in such settings. Hoare's research is significant to this study because it points out the significance of the social environment within which communities of practice exist and professional identities are developed. This research is aimed at gaining insights and an understanding of the dynamics of professional and organisational socialisation that contributes to the development of a Headteacher's identity.

In much of the headship research, there is an absence of using or developing conceptual models. None of the research cited undertook an in-depth qualitative study with Headteachers and so they have not explored the narratives of how such leaders see themselves within their role and as they develop their professional identities. By exploring these phenomena, the use of visual and narrative methodology suggests original research.

The study is also likely to be significant because little is understood about the processes of interaction and socialisation between Headteachers and their sociocultural context. A better understanding of Headteachers' perceptions and interpretations, as well as the processes of interaction, offers the potential to improve the quality and effectiveness of Headteachers.

Despite the development of teacher identities gaining prominence in the literature, it has not been taken into consideration in the context of Headteachers of all-girls' selective independent schools. I argue that whilst formal qualifications are very

important and even desirable in any effort to improve the quality of educational leadership, there is a need to gain a clearer insight into the interaction between a Headteacher and their network of settings where their identities are affirmed, reaffirmed and, in turn, how these identities develop a sense of Headteacher self. Gaining a better understanding of how these professionals have formed their identities would enhance the support for Headteachers, so as to enhance their communities of practice and reshape their conception of headship according to school context and expectations. In particular, this research challenges those discourses of formal Headteacher training which solely focus upon technical skills, leaving self-formation processes unexamined. An understanding of the construction of identities may be useful for the design of future training programmes in helping prospective Headteachers and others to recognize the important role identity plays in enhancing the communities of practice within their immediate context.

Finally, there is potential theoretical significance in the practical application of the model of identities construction proposed in this research. The study examines the specific dimensions of communities of practice and their relationship to the Headteachers' identities. This approach is in line with Colley's (2014) assertion that professional identities are developed via involvement in communities of practice. In examining the literature there appeared to be very little which specifically addressed headship within the context of all-girls' selective independent schools which supporting my assertion that there needs to be more exploration. Moreover, I am anticipating that the process and outcomes of this research may have a direct and positive influence on my own professional development in my role as Headteacher.

Theoretical and methodological framework

A narrative inquiry paradigm was used in this study. The four participating Headteachers, from all-girls' independent selective schools, were interviewed using an open-ended conversational approach. The transcripts of the interviews were coded in a variety of ways using a thematic approach to narratives (Riessman, 2008). The thematic approach is discussed in Chapter Three of this paper. The findings of this study are shared through the Headteachers' narratives in Chapter Five. As Connelly & Clandinin (2000) suggest, 'narrative is the phenomenon studied in the inquiry (p. 22), therefore, narrative is a way of thinking of experience, and as the researcher, I considered the experiences of the Headteachers through the narratives they told.

These narrated experiences were critical to the construction of their Headteacher identities. Their principles are closely related to the social constructionist view of learning and the processes involved in Lave & Wenger's (1991) community of practice theory. As such, this makes a narrative research an ideal approach for a social constructionist study of Headteacher practice and complements the use of communities of practice as the theoretical framework for my study which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Organisation of thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters: introduction, review of related literature, methodology, my narrative, presentation of the data, discussion, and implications and conclusion. Following this introduction, Chapter Two, reviews related literature. The first section clarifies many key terms and examines various perspectives of headship. The review then focusses on the main influencers on the construction of identities as well as discussing obstacles to

the construction of professional identities. The chapter ends by outlining the use of a model of identities construction which will form the structure of analysis.

The methodology is presented in Chapter Three. First, the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the study are presented. This is followed by a discussion of the aims and justification of the methods used. A detailed account is then provided about the data collection and analysis processes, followed by ethical considerations and encountered challenges are discussed. Chapter Four serves as an example of how the data analysis process occurred. To illustrate this, I have used my own narrative. Chapter Five presents the Headteachers' narratives which have been analysed using a variety of differing analytic processes including the construction of an identities plot. In Chapter Six, the findings of the study are discussed in relation to the research questions, context and existing literature management of multiple identities, agency and community memberships. Finally, in Chapter Seven, implications are drawn related to Headteacher professional development and educational research. Recommendations of the study and contributions to knowledge conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the literature

The theoretical framework taken up in this thesis, in order to conceptualise the formation of Headteachers' identities, is taken from Wenger's (1998, p. 5) 'communities of practice' model. However, prior to exploring in more detail Headteachers' socialisation within their communities of practice, this chapter will begin by clarifying and exploring the use of the plethora of terms that are used in the academic literature and how they apply to this study.

In order to fully explore the concept of headship identities, it has been necessary to look at the range of different literatures, where the concepts have been looked at in various ways. My review of the literature here will include research which has sought to explore the process of identity formation, research which looks at the factors influencing identity formation, and that research which specifically focusses on the Headteacher identities. The final section will discuss a proposed model of construction of identities which links various theories of identities and the communities of practice framework.

> 'Teacher professional identity sits at the core of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act', and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society … teacher identity is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience.' (Sachs, 2005, p.15)

Sachs' statement here echoes many of my own sentiments, thus it seems an apt way to begin this chapter. But while we might take it as a given that identity is central to teaching, as Sachs does here, there appear to be no givens, nor is such certainty

reflected in the wider literature when we come to ask what teacher identity might be or what it might look like in practice. Indeed, there are a multitude of studies which focus on this topic, each looking at it from a different perspective. In terms of Headteacher professional identities, it might be the case that some more certainty is granted, but perhaps only in the fact that there has been less research in this area. Many researchers have come to the conclusion that either these must be strong identities, or they must pertain to teachers' identities, and thus the research in this area can be used to draw conclusions on headship, too. It is for these reasons that this chapter starts by trying to explore and define these key terms and concepts and why it will subsequently turn to look at a variety of literatures (not just those directly relating to Headteacher identity).

Clarification of the terms

A common feature to be identified across the research literatures is the plural use of identity. Indeed, there appears to be some agreement that teachers and Headteachers do not simply form one identity, but instead must be considered in relation to a number of identities. For example, a Headteacher may identify as a parent, a child and a partner, as well as a Headteacher, at any one point in time. Burke & Stets (2003), for example, claim that an individual associates with multiple identities at any one time and is likely to be categorised in a number of ways. They refer to these as: 'social identities' (which they feel describe an individual's membership to a particular group); 'person identities' (which they believe refer to unique meanings that define an individual); and 'role identities' (which define 'the internalised meanings of a role that individuals apply to themselves', p.114).

Tajfel (2010) also make a similar point when they suggest that professional

identities (within an educational context) form ‘the part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a professional and social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership’ (p. 255). Their definition suggests a link between the role, the personal experience, and other social identities. Thus their work seems to suggest that identification is about how an individual comes to terms with themselves (makes sense of their own identity) and how they are positioned by others (how others understand them).

Thus, I would argue that a majority of the literature considers identity as something that is plural, but also as something that is personal, social and professional in nature. This is an approach which I also adopt in this research – choosing to talk about plural identities, rather than a singular and static entity. This, I believe, also allows me to account for both the personal and public – to see how the two intertwine as people enter a position of headship.

However, the confusion doesn’t end at the term ‘identity’. Further confusion can result from the literature, owing to the fact that some authors use the terms ‘professional identities’, ‘teacher identities’ or ‘Headteacher identities’ interchangeably. In this thesis, I have chosen to adopt the term ‘professional identities’ from this point onwards. This decision is based on the understanding that the term ‘Headteacher identity’ might be considered entirely ‘role-based’, whereas the term ‘professional identities’ allows for some fluidity and recognition that there might be more to these understandings of self than just that which is thought to traditionally accompany the role. Indeed, Burke & Stets (2003) argue that ‘professional identities’ more adequately refers to all the attributes that are assigned

to the teaching profession by either those outside of the profession, or not just those experienced/felt by the Headteachers themselves. The focus of this study is on the meanings and interpretations relating to the professional identities of Headteachers within the context of all-girls' selective independent schools – I wish to acknowledge the various social, personal and role identities which might be experienced by my participants who take up this position.

Finally, it needs to be recognised that further confusion can result from the 'identities' literature, around the fact that the terms 'identity' and 'self' are also used variously and interchangeably. This is something that Tajfel (2010) particularly comments upon, suggesting that these are ill-defined terms, and that their resulting application is intertwined and confused. My approach to this is taken from Wenger (1998) who suggests that identities might be understood as 'a layering of events of social meaning' (p. 151). As people encounter the effects on the world and develop their relations with others, these layers build up to produce identities. Identities are, then, the complex interweaving of experiences and relationships and it is in the bringing together of these layers (i.e. in the negotiation of meaning) hence individuals construct who they are. Our self-meaning exists as an ongoing process of negotiations and, hence, identities do exist – not as an object, but as a constant negotiation of the self. What I feel Wenger demonstrates in this definition is a very subtle difference in the terms. Therefore, throughout this study I will use both terms, but with the term 'self' denoting the complex multitude of identities that come to shape a person's sense of self over time.

It is hoped that, by initially explaining the terminology used in this study, this will provide consistency and clarity for the reader. The next section will review the

educational literature, to explore the concepts and differing perspectives of educational professional identities. Discussions will become focussed specifically on Headteacher identities, although some of the literature sources relate to teachers' professional identities.

Perspectives on professional identities of Headteachers

Although the concept of identities is very complex and multilayered, this section begins by offering a number of definitions, from the educational literature, for the concept of identities which can be applied to Headteachers. Wenger's (1998) work seems to be the most frequently mentioned in the literature on teacher identities and provides this definition:

> 'An identity, then, is a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other. As we encounter our effects on the world and develop our relations with others, these layers build upon each other to produce our identity as a very complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections. Bringing the two together through the negotiation of meaning, we construct who we are. In the same way that meaning exists in its negotiation, identity exists – not as an object in itself – but in the constant work of negotiating the self.'
>
> (Wenger, 1998, p.151)

From Wenger's perspective, identities are perceived as a continual process of social experiences; how we interpret these experiences and how we construct our own meaning of the experiences. A review of the literature would seem to demonstrate that a common theme to crop up in research relates to the processual nature of the construction of identities. A good deal of research undertaken on this issue (for example: Alsup, 2006; Gee, 2000) seems to suggest that identities are not fixed across time, but are continuously worked on and shaped by the person.

However, Beijaard et al. (2004) provide an alternative definition of identities:

> ‘Identities can generally be defined as who or what someone is, the various meanings people attach to themselves, or the meanings attributed to them by others’ (p.750)

The subtle difference in Beijaard et al.’s definition is that identities are seen as an ongoing process of interpreting oneself as a certain kind of person and being recognised as such in a given context. From a similar perspective, Danielewicz (2001) defines identities as:

> ‘our understanding of who we are and of who we think other people are. Reciprocally, it also encompasses other people’s understanding of themselves and others’ (p.10).

Some educational research, including Sachs (2005), focusses upon teachers’ professional identities and adopts Danielewicz’s definition. As such, identities are explained to be all the attributes that are assigned to the teaching profession by either those outside the profession or indeed by teachers themselves.

Crow (2006) also focussed on the attributes of headship in their study which researched governors’ preconceived expectations of Headteachers. By using a mixed-methods approach, they found that governors and Headteachers alike perceived their roles to be predominantly about doing what was expected or prescribed for them by the school governors, the community and colleagues. These findings had particular significance during the recruitment and appointment process of a Headteacher as governors held a ‘perceived fit’ (p.173) of what type of person would be required for their particular school culture. This study found, more often than not, that the successful appointment of a Headteacher was not based on particular knowledge or skill sets, but more on governors’ preconceived and desired social identities such as gender, ethnicity, age and political stance (Crow, 2006). It would appear from their study that Headteachers are constantly deciphering others’

expectations of ‘fit’, which causes individuals to change their behaviours in order to maintain these social expectations of headship. It could therefore be argued that Headteachers often compromise their professional identities in an effort to fit into, rather than reform or develop, existing school structures.

A final definition of identities comes from the leaders in the field of teacher research, Connelly & Clandinin (1999), who view identities as the stories teachers tell; teachers’ stories are their identities. Teachers’ identities, according to these researchers, lie in the stories teachers share about their lives in their schools. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) also endorse Connelly & Clandinin’s definition and claims that in sharing their stories, teachers negotiate and construct their identities.

Taking into consideration the various definitions from the literature, I need to explain the understanding of Headteacher identities which is applied to this study. For me, each Headteacher constructs his or her identities as opposed to these identities being something that happens to us. As individuals, we decide who we are within our role, along with considering who we want to become as educators. Headteachers determine the beliefs that will influence their role while making intentional decisions about how social interactions within the school contexts will (or will not) affect who each of us as Headteachers. In my thinking, I equally rely upon Danielewicz’s (2001) concept that headship identities involve our knowledge of who we are as educational leaders, and Connelly & Clandinin’s (1999) approach that we determine our identities through the process of creating narratives about our lives in school. Essential to Headteacher identities is being in control of defining ourselves as educational leaders and an awareness of how our contexts are influential on our professional

identities. I also acknowledge that professional identities provide a framework for Headteachers that makes it possible for them to construct their own ideas and beliefs about how to be a Headteacher and how to understand their role as an educational leader. The critical importance for Headteachers to understand their own identities is expressed by Danielewicz (2001):

> 'What makes someone a good educator is engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive themselves as if teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving' (p.3).

Researchers differ in their definitions of teacher identities, but the common theme across all the literature is that the construction of Headteacher identities is a process (Beijaard et al., 2004). Many authors agree that identities are not fixed attributes, but are instead an ongoing process of interpreting and reinterpreting oneself. The processual features of the construction of identities will be explored in the next paragraphs.

The discussion begins with research conducted by Alsup (2006) who carried out a longitudinal study on trainee teachers in order to understand how their professional identities were developed and constructed. Alsup claims that each teacher interacts and engages with a variety of groups and communities, both in and out of school, which means that individuals create multiple identities. These groups and communities each come with their particular discourses and, through proactive engagement, these discourses contribute to the process of identities construction. Using a term from Gee (2000), Alsup describes the differences (space) between these various discourses as 'borderlands', and it is these borderlands that have the potential to create tensions. For example, if a Headteacher attends an alumnae function with lawyers, there is 'space' between the discourses as an educator and

the unfamiliar discourse of those working in law. Alsup claims that recognition and a conscious awareness of these borderlands and the associated tensions has the potential to change an individual's identities.

This notion of the construction and evolution of identities being triggered by tensions (borderlands) is mirrored in research carried out by Sikes (2010) who also studied individuals new to the profession of teaching. Their observations found 'that tensions were felt by student teachers as they considered themselves as inhabiting two worlds: the world of a college student and the classroom teacher' (p. 10). The authors concluded that it was when a student teacher responded to these tensions that new professional identities were being constructed. Thus, this research suggests that Headteachers (not only those new to the role) will potentially hold onto multiple identities, and tensions will enable the Headteacher to transform and reconstruct their professional identities.

Not all research agrees that tensions promote potential changes to professional identities; there are other studies which seemingly contrast these claims. For example, Clarke (2009), who also suggests that identities are constructed by a process, yet transformation and reconstruction of identities is seen as a result of gaining knowledge and skills through formal and informal leadership and professional courses. Such studies (Clark, 2009; Ribbins, 2003) researched the impact of formal courses on the construction of teacher identities. It appears that teachers worked hard to avoid possible tensions between discourses by drawing upon knowledge and skills often acquired through formal leadership courses. Developing and gaining professional knowledge and skills allowed the participating

teachers to reconceptualise their school role and to realign their professional identities by discarding identities from other groups or communities that were deemed not relevant to their role. However, Crow (2007) cautioned that 'leadership development programs can perpetuate leaders' 'self-preoccupations' through their emphasis on 'self-development,' 'self-awareness,' and 'self-improvement'' (p.187). Therefore, Headteachers need to be aware that prioritising development of only their personal identities may 'restrict their understanding of colleagues and ultimately constrain effective practice' (Crow, 2007, p.186). This suggests that, whilst formal courses have the potential to transform and develop headship professional identities, caution should be given as this could be seen as serving self rather than others; and Crow warns that an over-reliance on formal courses may cause a Headteacher to lose touch with colleagues and the school culture.

Other research studies have justified the overwhelming significance and importance of formal professional courses and how they positively impact on Headteachers' professional identities. These studies have focussed upon the current educational culture which is dominated by accountability regimes, numerous educational, business requirements, and an intensification of workload. Within this culture, headship identities have increasingly become focussed on managerial tasks, which Jones (2008) warns 'are steering Headteachers away from professional ways of being and doing' (p.692) and, as a result, is questioning the very essence of who a Headteacher is. Jones continues by claiming that this dominance of a management-focussed role is a possible source of Headteacher frustration which is having a negative effect on their identities and, in turn, their self-narrative; 'it is hard to maintain a view of oneself as a leader if one spends most of the time engaged in managerial tasks' (Jones, 2008, p.691). The conclusion from Thomson's research is

that some professional courses and development programmes acknowledge this apparent frustration and serve as a way of improving self-esteem, satisfaction and fulfilment amongst the Headteachers (Jones, 2008; Day & Leithwood, 2007; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). The assumption made from these studies is that by improving a Headteacher's self-esteem, satisfaction and fulfilment enables individuals to have the confidence to reconstruct their identities.

It appears, from the discussions of this section, that identities are more than just the meanings attached to the headship role. Identities are both self- and co-constructed to achieve a sense of worth, coherence and belonging (Lumby & English, 2009). Based on my readings of the literature, I view professional identities as addressing the question, "Who am I?" – hence, identities are both a state of being and becoming and provide us with a sense of motivation and a sense of direction to one's role. Understanding who one is as a Headteacher becomes increasingly challenging within dynamic and ever-changing contexts and so the next section highlights and discusses some of the prominent influencers on headship professional identities.

Factors influencing the process of professional identity formation

This section seeks to explore the factors which influence the development and construction of Headteachers' professional identities, with a particular view on social structures and agency. The question from the literature is often presented as: how much of these identities can Headteachers choose for themselves and how much is determined by pre-existing social structure and their role? Gunter (2001) explored professional identities in terms of agency, emotion and social structure, where 'agency is concerned with subjective capability and capacity to control', and 'social

structures are concerned with external controls' (p.5). According to Gunter, our identities, then, are shaped according to the level of agency (or control) we are able to exercise, or according to the degree to which the structures within which we operate control or shape who we are and what we do. This suggests that the way in which we emotionally perceive and live out our roles (as Headteacher, wife, member of a club) will be dependent in some respects upon this balance. Therefore, this section addresses some aspects of a Headteacher's social structure which will influence their identities, and also the concept of agency is discussed.

The influence of life histories and past experiences on professional identities

There is a body of knowledge which seems to suggest that events in a person's life history and past experience are a determining factor in who a Headteacher becomes and the identities they take up. For example, Bullough, Knowles & Crow (1991) have written several case studies of first-year teachers in an effort to help them think about developing as professionals and to develop their understanding of their 'teaching self'. In the process of developing and analysing year-long case studies of six first-year trainee teachers, which involved them developing teachers' metaphors, it became apparent that each had individual motives and reasons for entering the profession which were based on their previous life experiences. This research recognises that many (perhaps most) teachers consider teaching not simply a role play, but a form of life – an embodied expression of who the teacher is or is striving to be as a human being (Hargreaves, 1998).

The central belief to Bullough et al.'s (1991) research was that professional

identities, expressed as teachers' metaphors, were more or less a coherent system of beliefs grounded in biography and bounded by emotions. These identities became crucial to the trainee teachers as they struggled to find and form a life-affirming place within schools. For example, in a longitudinal study which required participants to develop their teacher metaphor, a secondary English teacher conceived himself as a 'husbandman' (Bullough et al., 1991, p.34). Throughout student teacher training and into the first year of teaching, this metaphor, based on his role prior to entering the profession, called him back to his central beliefs and allowed him to sharpen his role enactment. These studies have reinforced the notion that our life histories and our past experiences contribute to our 'possible selves' (p. 43). The use of developing metaphors were effective ways of developing and capturing the current identities, based on past experiences, but also to form desired images of future self, which Geijsel & Meijers (2005, p.421) call the 'I positions'.

Following on from Bullough et al.'s (1991) study, Holland & Lave (2001) continued the debate about how new teachers use their past experiences to 'endure struggles and the historical production of professional identities' (p.5). Likewise, they emphasised the use of the term 'struggle' in that it suggested an ongoing active engagement and avoided the notion that identities are stable and static. Their term 'history in person' (Holland & Lave, 2001, p.5) was useful in this study as it summarised the way in which identities are products of an ongoing process which is influenced by a person's history.

Some research has suggested that past experiences are so influential that there is little that formal training or courses can do to shift well-established beliefs and

values. One such study was conducted by Flores & Day (2006) who began their research by claiming that prior experiences and the associated belief systems of a person's life history often serve as filters and, as a result, have an influence on the current-day sense-making. Their research, involving trainee and newly qualified teachers, concluded that formal professional development courses could not negate the influence of past experiences which appear to be well-embedded and at the heart of any individual. Some research even suggests that, once a teacher is aware of their own well-established and historical beliefs and identities, it is sometimes necessary to consider 'un-doing' some of these prior beliefs. Sumara & Luce-Kapler (1996) explain a term, 'un(becoming a teacher)', which suggests that 'un(becoming)' refers to the need for teachers new to the profession to reconsider their beliefs about who they are, and then to consider how they will change or alter these beliefs as they become teachers. Becoming a teacher means changing who you are, and sometimes it involves 'unbecoming' aspects of the identities brought to the practice of teaching.

The research examples discussed illustrate not only that Headteachers' past experiences have an impact on their professional identities, but also their beliefs that have stemmed from their life histories could potentially be challenged as they continue the process to establish themselves in their role and become a Headteacher. There are plenty of references to the presence of a struggle as Headteachers search for ways to reconcile their life histories and the associated beliefs and expectations with the life experiences of the role. These matches or mismatches may result in emotional episodes that some researchers associate with the process of development and construction of teachers' professional identities, and

will be discussed in the next section.

Emotions and their influence on professional Identities

An emotional episode refers to those emotions that are triggered by some social interaction or experience with students, teachers or administration. According to Zembylas (2003), not all emotional episodes have the potential to signal and/or influence a teacher's emerging identities. However, in their research with both newly-qualified and experienced teachers, they cited examples where the critical emotional events seemed directly tied to some ongoing identity negotiations. The participating teachers recognised the active process of constructing and deconstructing their understanding of what it means to be a teacher and how they reflectively confronted the outcomes of the range of emotionally-laden events, experiences or interactions within their school. The participants also went on to claim that these emotional episodes could be either pleasant or unpleasant; however, in general, they either tended to call into question or affirm the participants' perception of themselves as teachers and their professional identities.

Following his narrative research, Zembylas (2003) claimed that an understanding of teacher identities depends on the connections between emotions and one's knowledge of self. The potential significance of emotions was also highlighted by Kelchtermans (1996) who suggested that, as teachers talk about their work, their talk 'immediately reveals that emotions are at the heart of teaching' (p.307). Hence, formation of identities and emotions are inextricably linked as they inform each other and determine interpretations of each other, 'the search for identities requires the connection of emotion with self-knowledge' (Zembylas, 2003, p.223).

Bullough et al. (1991) took this view further and considered emotions as interpretations of the world and, hence, they are embedded in the stories teachers tell and are therefore discursive in nature. Zembylas (2003) confirmed that it is through discourse and story that we create and describe our realities and experiences while engaged in social interactions and, hence, the feelings and emotions we assign all contribute to the self. This is an approach I also wish to take up in this research – to see identities as something situated within a person's experience of emotion, and emotions as a central part of making sense of their identities. It will be important for me to recognise and explore ways in which the emotional climate of a school might effect a teacher's sense of self. In this sense, I wish to explore emotions in a similar way to these other studies in that they are part of the fabric that constitutes the self, 'because of the way in which emotions inform and define people in a process of 'becoming' (Zembylas, 2003, p.223).

The above research studies have highlighted that the participating teachers vary in their description and understanding of pleasant and unpleasant emotional episodes. Bullough et al. (1991) certainly found that, generally, these reasons were because of agency; that is, teachers reporting that emotionally challenging or satisfying episodes were either due to reasons under their control (e.g. they are a bad/good teacher) or not under their control (e.g. they had no managerial role to effect change). The next section discusses the influence of agency on professional identities.

Agency and professional identities

The section begins by using Danielewicz's (2001) definition of the concept of agency as 'the starting place of doing' and suggests that agency is a quality of an individual that makes it possible for him or her to 'do' by believing that one is capable of taking

action. As a result, agency could be considered as the power and the freedom to act and to make decisions. Danielewicz goes on to claim that a person in possession of agency has an understanding of themselves, their identities, their desires and power, and so this knowledge and belief that one 'can do' motivates teachers in developing their professional identities.

Johnson & Golombek (2002) gave agency greater priority by claiming that it is central to teaching because it allows individuals to feel empowered, as it is the combination of intention and action that results in the construction of identities. Agency determines the directions individuals take and so influences their resulting behaviours; therefore, in terms of teaching, agency determines behaviours to help individuals make sense of the complexities and ambiguities of the profession. The tensions that often result as teachers struggle with these complexities cause teachers to change their practices and identities through agency.

A similar approach to agency was taken in Moore's (2002) study of the emerging identities of primary science teachers. Narrative interviews gauged the amount of agency the participants believed they had in the process of enforcing change within their practice. Agency, in this study, was described as 'gaining control over one's behaviour and having the power to act purposively and reflectively' (p.581). In terms of the participating teachers, agency was very prominent in their efforts to bring about change within their classrooms, and yet was seen as insignificant when it came to using their power or influence in more whole-school decision-making. This study suggests that, even for Headteachers who hold positions of power, agency is possibly only effective in changing personal identities and is not necessarily able to

influence the culture or identity of the whole school.

For this research study, the most applicable definition of agency is grounded in social circumstances and within the practice and communities of teaching. A teacher's capacity to intervene in his or her world depends on the individual's ability to interpret what is happening, along with their ability to make decisions; but also, the social circumstances and context must be considered a factor in agency (Bandura, 2006). The key to Bandura's research was that the participating teachers really believed that they could change their practice; without this belief in their abilities to effect results, the teachers had little incentive to act – 'belief in one's efficacy is a key personal resource in the construction of identities' (p.170). Bandura also reported that personal efficacy shaped one's expectations for outcomes, therefore, agency is the combination of capacity and potential that assists in making it possible for the teacher to have some control over his or her own identities. Bandura (2006) concludes his research by claiming that personal efficacy and an individual's capacity within their headship role can be determined, as well as improved, by gaining and acquiring a certain level of professional and occupational knowledge. The next section explores the influence of occupational knowledge.

Occupational knowledge and its influence on professional identities

There have been some longstanding assumptions that the use of language in social interactions influences the creation of knowledge which, in turn, can influence teachers' identities. Sumara & Luce-Kapler (1996) argued that professional identities are a result of a teacher's relationship with knowledge, how that knowledge is constructed and how that knowledge is used.

These assumptions were reinforced by earlier research carried out by Elbaz (1981) who identified that teachers have a broad range of knowledge that guides their work, for example: knowledge of the subject content, of teaching strategies, of how to structure learning experiences, and knowledge of students' needs and abilities. In Elbaz's study of an experienced English teacher, it was found that teachers also possess detailed knowledge of the social context of the school and community. Elbaz concluded by defining teachers' practical knowledge as 'knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development and instruction' (p.45). Elbaz (1981) conducted her study in an effort to dispel the negative view of teachers as simply passive transmitters of knowledge; but, in fact, teachers proactively use their knowledge to construct their professional identities. Beattie (1995) viewed Elbaz's study as a turning point in the research on teacher's thinking as, prior to this, teacher identities were considered as acquired knowledge, as opposed to knowledge gained through experience and reflection.

In a similar way, Schön (1983) also discussed teachers' practical knowledge as the practitioner's way of 'dealing with the swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution', and he continues, 'the problems of greatest human concern lie in the swamp where the teacher engages in the most important and challenging problems' (p.42). When asked to talk about their practice, teachers often spoke of 'experiences, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through' (p.43). Therefore, teachers' knowledge could be the result of a teacher's response to problems and is created by the culture and discourses of the school. Schön (1983) goes on to argue that knowledge is located in discourse, language and stories which are used to create and apply knowledge. Teachers predominantly use their

knowledge to create themselves as teachers.

Finally and in a similar vein, Johnson & Golombek (2002) claimed that ‘how teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work’ (p.2). The researchers added that teachers process as well as create knowledge, and how that knowledge is used is individual to each teacher and depends on the teacher’s knowledge of self and their professional identities. Johnson & Golombek (2002) also claimed that occupational knowledge is contextualised and often very specific to a particular school. The influence and impact of the educational context will be discussed in the next section.

Context and its influence on professional identities

This study takes a sociocultural approach in which I believe that all learning is a result of personal experience and engagement with others in real-life activities within a specific context. This approach is endorsed by Dewey (1938) who claims that, in order for an experience to be meaningful, it must simultaneously connect back to prior experiences yet influence future experiences, and so every learning activity in turn changes the person and their identities.

Dewey’s identities development and change is through contextual experiences and, likewise, Wenger (1998) claims the importance of a school community in which members engage with to encounter these experiences. These communities are called ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998, p.4) and are important for establishing the context in which Headteachers build relationships with colleagues and with students as they develop their leadership practices. Teaching identities are

negotiated through experience, membership in the school and local community, social interactions, and mediated by knowledge of themselves and their profession.

Flores & Day (2006) took Wenger's concept of communities of practice to carry out a longitudinal study on fourteen teachers to explore the key influencers that shape teachers' identities, including the teaching contexts. Flores & Day concluded that teachers working in contexts where there was collaboration were those most likely to possess positive attitudes towards teaching, because opportunities for collaboration provided support and meaningful development of the individual's professional identities. Another aspect of learning communities and professional development is the claim by Geijesel & Meijers (2005) that 'what teachers do together outside of the classroom can be as important as what they do inside' (p.422). According to this research, professional learning communities (the researchers used the term 'professional learning communities' in a generic way) are those in which teachers share a common purpose and share a collective interest and understanding, and where there is trust and respect for one another.

The term 'professional landscapes' was used by Connelly & Clandinin (1999) when referring to educational and school contexts and settings. These researchers reported on the professional landscape of one of the schools they studied and suggested that the life stories or identities of teachers are impacted by the context in which they are working. Within this particular school, Connelly & Clandinin found that, through collaboration and storytelling, teachers were being less prescriptive in their practices and were instead engaging students in more meaningful learning activities. The conclusion made in this research was that this collaborative environment also led to critical reflection on the part of the teachers. The teachers in

this study developed an understanding of the term ‘collaboration’ since they were located in a professional landscape that made it possible for them to construct their own meaning of the term as they actually engaged in collaboration.

A cohort of new teachers was the object of study for Cuddapah & Clayton (2011) and the purpose of their study was to determine how a professional cohort, serving as a community of practice, provided support for new teachers. The authors used the term ‘peripheral participation’ to describe newcomers entering the community, and it is through this peripheral participation that trainee teachers ‘undergo identity transformation into full participation’ (p.63). So it is through their participation that new teachers learn how to think, use the professional knowledge and act like a teacher.

In a similar way, Watson (2006) conducted an investigation, based on Giddens’ (1991) notion of self-identity, into the construction of a secondary English teacher’s professional identities. An in-depth interview enabled the teacher to recreate his professional life as a narration of a variety of ‘career episodes’, and the analysis inferred how the school context had influenced the teacher’s construction of his self and how the participant’s identities were played out during each career episode. Forbes & Weiner (2008) carried out similar research into the characteristics of Scottish independent schools and claimed that people discursively construct themselves and their ‘assumptive worlds’ (p.39) primarily through the use of language and discourse. The conclusion drawn from both these studies is that professional identities are in a constant flux and not only contribute to the characteristics of a school, but is, in turn, influenced by the context.

A teacher's identities are 'partly given and partly achieved' through participation in a social space, as suggested by Coldron & Smith (1999) which included the context and all the possibilities for relationships a teacher can have with others within that context. These relationships are determined by existing social structures and the history of the school's culture, and a teacher's identities depend on all the possibilities available. The perception that one is now a teacher places an individual in the collective identities of other teachers. Collective identities included recognition from peers and students that one is a teacher, and this transformation into a collective identity is often most intense during teacher teaching. Danielewicz (2001) suggests, 'We come to know who we are through social relationships with others' (p. 38).

Having identified that the context of a school is determined by the communities and relationships within the social structures, the next section discusses in more detail how Headteachers are professionally socialised into these communities of practice. The following section also serves the purpose of drawing together the individual influencers and highlighting the complexity of socialisation for Headteachers.

Professional socialisation into the community of practice

The construction of teacher's professional identities is said to be influenced by numerous socialisation experiences, yet researchers conclude that it is ultimately shaped by socialisation predominately within the school (Crow, 2007; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Ely et al., 1991). Crow (2007) defines this socialisation as the 'informal learning process through which individuals take on the values of the non-membership group to which they aspire' (p.319), suggesting Headteachers move

through a sequence of roles and experiences which will facilitate alignment to a particular reference group and the adoption of their values and behaviours.

More specifically, Weindling (2003) and Crow (2007) define professional socialisation as gaining the skills, knowledge and dispositions to enact a leadership role which is predominantly acquired through personal school experience, working with colleagues, previous headships, taking on leadership roles and formal headship training. Ely et al. (1991), however, argued that formal preparation courses for aspiring Headteachers are the only effective way to initiate professional construction and subsequent performance of the headship identities (p.97). Based on this, I would argue that headship learning is a dynamic and career-long process that begins much earlier and involves more than socialisation that happens during formal preparation courses. The process is more a two-way interaction between the individual (the Headteacher) and the context (the school) where each tries to influence and change the other (Watson, 2006). Construction of identities is therefore seen as a combination of formal and informal social interactions.

Crow's (2007) study involving aspiring 'principals' in the USA identified three sociocultural sources of construction of identities: a) observations of role models while they were teachers; b) experience as teachers; and c) non-educational life experiences. However, the participants in their study underlined the significance of socialisation within the school. Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) research added to Crow's (2007) list of sociocultural sources as Headteachers in their research revealed four major influential themes on a Headteacher's identities: a) role conceptualisation of headship; b) initial socialisation into the community of practice; c) role-identity

transformation; and d) purposeful engagement in the role. In this way, both these research findings support the notion that the process of becoming a Headteacher and developing headship identities is complex, and working with colleagues in a school setting is central to the process of a Headteacher's socialisation into a community of practice. According to Brown-Ferrigno's (2003) research, the extent to which a school controls the socialisation of a Headteacher could have a potential effect on the fit of a Headteacher to a school; hence, from this perspective, the above research reinforces the two-way process between the school's influence on the Headteacher and their influence on the school (p.496).

An exploration of South African headship identities by Moorosi (2014) has also concluded that the construction of identities was the coming together of gender, race, background and context, along with the development of personal attributes through interactive learning and socialisation with others. During their research, interviews with school leaders demonstrated that Headteachers achieved different milestones of leadership identities at different stages of their career. In an attempt to explore such a journey of the construction process, Jones (2008) interviewed ten British male Headteachers serving in diverse school settings. They were asked to reflect retrospectively upon their roles and their life experiences in order to acknowledge those that had shaped their construction of professional identities. She found that these Headteachers had a strong sense of their own abilities and self-confidence in succeeding in their role; moreover, their professional identities were shaped by parents, governors and the society into the 'stereotypes' of masculinity. Male Headteachers' professional identities were bound up with a sense of power and discipline, rather than nurture, which was found to characterise their female

counterparts. Ribbins' (2003) quote below provides an overarching conclusion:

> 'Headteachers are socialised into deep rooted norms and values by the action and interaction of key agencies including the family, school and other reference groups. These agencies … shape personality by generating a conception of self, along with the rudiments of a work style attitude and outlook' (p.89).

Cowie & Crawford's (2008) narrative study, involving seven female professionals, explored the experiences that Headteachers encountered early in their leadership role. Headteachers' narratives suggested that the NPQH had been particularly helpful in equipping individuals with the 'skills and abilities required to deal productively and confidently with the issues they are likely to face' (p.12). Formal and informal opportunities of courses, collaborative activities and networking had urged the Headteachers to exchange experiences, develop and extend their learning, and establish their professional identities with self-belief and high levels of confidence. These findings confirm that Headteachers need to be helped to develop confidence in their leadership capabilities and to acquire the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills in order to embed their identities.

Drawing from evidence provided by these studies, it becomes evident that individuals, regardless of gender, do not suddenly assume the role of Headteacher, but develop headship knowledge, skills and attributes through various socialisation experiences. Construction of identities seems to be formed through training, shadowing former Heads, experiences of leadership and life in a non-educational context. Headteachers also bring their own set of values, beliefs and role expectations which are tested as they are socialised in schools. The ongoing interactions of all these factors between the individual and the context initiates the process of role identities changing into new professional identities (Daresh & Male,

2000; Crawford & Earley, 2011).

The Headteachers' process of construction of identities appears to be a balancing act between the internal and external expectations placed upon them. As Moorosi (2014) claims:

> 'the internal view of professional self is a vital component because it is based on what a person values in their roles and informs their professional practice. These internal beliefs and perceptions need to be reconciled with a critical interpretation of external identities to enable the individual to practice their profession with integrity' (p.829).

Davies (2009) and Bukor (2015) claim that, in order to fully understand leadership traits and the role of headship, we need to appreciate the 'links between who we are and how we lead, as this is critical to success in schools' (p.5). Bukor's (2015) idea that 'leadership begins and ends with the self' (p.6) is similar to the concept of emotional intelligence of Pescosolido (2002) which describes various qualities such as self-awareness, self-confidence, self-control, self-regulation, self-motivation and empathy as being significant. Similar qualities are described by Northouse (2009): 'people skills – those abilities that help a leader to work effectively with workers, peers and superiors to accomplish the organisational goals' (p.69). Northouse's research does suggest that there is a relationship between the 'people skills' shown in a Headteacher and their effectiveness in leading a school.

Day et al. (2008) discuss the differences between individual identities versus organisational identities by suggesting that Headteachers describe themselves as 'educators' (p.40), despite individuals being influenced by other identities, including historical and others outside of education. According to Wenger (1998), 'we all belong to a number of communities – for example, at home, at work, at schools, in

our hobbies – and, as a result, we could have multiple identities' (p.6). This suggests that, although Headteachers prioritise their roles as educators when in school, other experiences may continue to have an influence on their self, which Kellett et al. (2002) attributed to the suggestion that, within a working context, it is easier to compartmentalise professional identities. Research carried out by Day & Leithwood (2007) upheld the claim of multiple identities as they investigated the influential presence that the identities of motherhood had on Headteachers. Whilst there is an overwhelming consensus that multiple identities exist, it nevertheless seems that each individual identity cannot be completely autonomous from the others.

From an organisational perspective, headship has been described as 'being attuned to and in touch with the intricate web of inter and intra relationships that influence an organisation' (Harris, 2008, p.34). According to researchers who have investigated this 'interpersonal leadership' (for example, Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2007), this involves the Headteacher having an awareness of their self within the context of collaboration and interpersonal relationships within their schools. This reinforces Hargreaves' (1998) notion that emotions are at the heart of teaching. Osterman (2000) explains the theoretical importance of emotional relationships formed by a Headteacher, as it is assumed that they need to have a sense of group identity and belonging to a community.

Closely related to relationships formed by the Headteacher are the emotions that exist within a school. Much research, such as that carried out by Atkinson (2000), has shown a positive effect on school outcomes when teachers feel positive about themselves and the organisation. These findings suggest that the behaviour of

school leaders has a significant influence on the way teachers feel about themselves and, hence, the way the students, in turn, perceive themselves and their attitude to learning. West Burnham (2013) points to the observations made by Atkinson (2000) that link this positive self-concept to good relationships.

Hence, the suggestion that leadership is a process of influence over others is useful as it confirms and aligns to the ontological approach in this project that leadership is a social process. Gunter (2001) goes further and suggests that, if all leadership phenomena are socially constructed, then 'leaders must spend some of their time constructing a community of followers' (p. 4); this confirms the concept of a sense of belonging and the importance of group identities. Research conclusions confirm that a positive, direct, personal relationship with a leader (in this case, a Headteacher) has an effect on followers' self-identities and self-concepts.

Ackers (1995) was very clear that leaders have a direct effect on the working self-concept of followers, and Lord & Brown (2004) confirm that 'many powerful forms of leadership are thought to influence the identities of followers' (p.23). Interestingly, leadership has more often than not been conceptualised as a rational process, whereby leaders influence others to believe that it is in their own interest to be led (Cranton, 2006). However, this new conceptualisation of a reciprocal, emotional relationship and an influence process between the leader and the led, is now gathering momentum (Gunter, 2001). At the root of this new paradigm are leadership emotions. Cranton (2006) uses the term 'authentic' to describe a leader who is anchored by their own deep sense of self. Whilst they propose that a personal moral core is an essential aspect, the identities of 'authentic leaders' refer to the ingrained

knowledge of their position on important issues, values and beliefs.

Other researchers, namely Begley & Johannson (2003), Beatty (2002) and Walker (2004), describe leadership as an art, rather than a science, because it involves bringing oneself into the workplace and proactively using it to develop core values and relationships with colleagues. These authors emphasise how important it is that Headteachers in their leadership role are multidimensional, as well as ensuring that they work on an individual and personal level, thus remaining 'true' to their inner self. The paradox of this is that, whilst leadership is characterised by many different identities, many Headteachers and followers dismiss leadership as little more than an act unless individual leaders ensure that their self, and hence their multiple identities, used or revealed is a genuine part of who they are (Malm, 2008). This research suggests that, whilst individuals may perceive that headship is a series of role identities, to be effective it has to be a genuine expression of their self; otherwise colleagues and peers may feel that they had been duped (Malm, 2008). Therefore, as well as having a greater awareness of the relationships with other people, individual Headteachers need to be very self-aware.

In educational headship research, very little has specifically focussed on all-girls' selective independent schools; however, I do not see this as a restriction in terms of the results drawn from this study, as Crawford & Earley (2011) point out that the socialisation process in different schools, and in-between different facets of a Headteacher's career, will still inform headship learning, as it will enable them to build their repertoire of identities.

Communities of practice concepts which influence the socialisation of Headteachers

It has already been established that the professional identity construction process is a complex one and said to be influenced by numerous socialisation experiences. Within a school context, many of these socialisation experiences are gained from the participation within communities of practice (Wenger 1998). With this in mind, this section discusses some of the key concepts associated with the communities of practice framework. It will also examine how these factors might influence the process of identity construction.

Within the communities of practice theoretical model, there are often thought to be three key dimensions: mutual engagement (community), joint enterprise (domain) and shared repertoire (practice). Wenger (1998), himself, is thought to have claimed that these dimensions are at the heart of communities of practice. In this research I have clung to the terms 'mutual engagement', 'joint enterprise' and 'shared repertoire' (rather than adopt the language of community, domain and practice) owing to the fact that these terms themselves helped me to emphasise the sociocultural nature of this process and better describe the professional relationships and dynamics within the communities of practice.

It is the existence of these three dimensions that Wenger suggests sets communities of practice apart from clubs, networks and other familiar collectives. Wenger (1998) suggested that community members might not always recognise these dimensions; nevertheless, he claims that they remain important in distinguishing and defining communities of practice. His reasons were that, in order for communities of practice

to exist, there must first be a joint enterprise (domain) which defines the identity of the community of practice as a network of members with a common commitment. Second, Wenger suggests that mutual engagement (community) is a necessary component to allow individuals to work towards the joint enterprise by interacting with each other, forming relationships and learning together in order for a community of practice to be formed. Finally, Wenger suggested that the third dimension might encompass shared repertoires (practices), which could include stories, processes and procedures, experiences resources, etc. Communities are considered to develop their repertoire by sharing professional knowledge, resources, experience and stories which creates a sense of defining shared identities. Hence, the communities of practice serve as a facilitator or vehicle for engagement, knowledge management as well as the building of relationships through joint enterprise and activities, all of which Wenger (1998) cited as important to developing professional identities.

One of the reasons for using the communities of practice framework is that it recognises that Headteachers (or other professionals/members) belong to a number of communities, and as a result acquire and develop multiple identities. Wenger (1998) claimed that as part of the process of socialisation, these multiple identities needed to be managed. To explain this process of management, the concept of ‘boundaries’ or ‘boundary encounters’ was developed which related to the notion whether an individual belonged to a community of practice or not. Wenger’s (1998) understanding of boundaries was that they were frontiers where: ‘competence and experience tend to diverge: a boundary interaction is usually an experience of being exposed to a new practice’ (p. 233). Wenger went onto explain that when individuals

move between communities of practices, during the process of socialisation, boundaries will be negotiated, and a re-conceptualisation of identities could occur.

The notion of boundaries existing between communities of practice was something also adopted in research carried out by Day et al. (2008), who claimed that individuals could recognise and develop multiple identities through their belonging to a number of different communities of practice. These researchers suggested that when members encounter a boundary, the negotiation and subsequent participation in a new community of practice may involve retaining practices, values and beliefs from various communities. This suggests that an individual's professional identities are a combination of old and newly acquired experiences from a variety of communities of practice.

Day et al. (2008) also considered boundaries as a positive phenomenon because of the way in which they provided individuals with multiple identities and opportunities to garner new experiences. However, in contrast, Cuddapah & Clayton (2011) claimed that the existence of boundaries between different communities of practice might hinder an individual's interaction and participation. Thus, these authors suggested that they might work to prevent or delay new members from being able to identify themselves as legitimate members of a community of practice. Wenger (1998) regarded participation within a community of practice as a 'source of identity' (p. 56) and as a result claimed that peripheral participation within a community of practice would not help the development of identities. This in itself suggests that boundaries might not be entirely helpful in the formation of identities, at the very least because they delay the possibility of full participation in the communities.

Wenger (1998) further claimed that individuals enter a community of practice by a process of participation that is at first legitimately peripheral, but through engagement and experiences, an individual will participate fully. Wenger described this initial engagement as legitimate peripheral participation and claimed that the process of becoming a full participant is complex and multifaceted. Interestingly, West-Burnham (2013) acknowledged that, depending upon the situation and circumstances, a Headteacher could potentially participate in a peripheral or full way in the same community of practice. This suggests that boundaries might work in a different way as people enter a community of practice and that there might be some room to consider how and when people become 'full' community members. It also suggests that becoming a legitimate full member of a community is not necessarily a linear process.

What we might also take from this is that newcomers to a community of practice might face something of a dilemma. On the one hand they will need to engage in existing practice which has developed over time before they become full members of the community; yet they will also have a stake in the community's future development (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Based on this Fineman (2000) suggested that emotions are key to understanding this process and that they might be used voluntarily and involuntarily in response to certain events including participation in a new community of practice. The significance of emotions within communities of practice is also something which is supported by Swan (1994) whose research with female leaders looked at the gendered nature of emotions within such communities. Her findings reinforced that the presence of emotional encounters were vital for the construction of shared meanings and membership to a community of practice.

There are many aspects of communities of practice, then, that could potentially influence the process of socialisation. In this study; emotions, the existence of multiple identities and the level of participation within the communities of practice were chosen as being the most relevant to the chosen research questions.

A proposed model for the construction of Headteacher professional identities

Throughout the process of reviewing the literature, I began to appreciate that there are many factors which might shape an understanding of a Headteacher's identities. Whilst I am convinced that these are experienced individually, the literature discussed in the previous sections makes a strong case for the argument that these identities are developed and constructed within communities. Hence, I have chosen to frame this research and explore Headteachers' identities as part of the 'communities of practice' approach. It is thought that most of the theories and conceptualisations of professional identities within the 'communities of practice' approach remain on a general level, with very little elaboration of how exactly the theoretical principles are used to understand the construction process (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). Many authors, including Dewey (1938); Mead (1934) and Kuhn (2008), have suggested the use of more focussed theoretical models are needed to represent the complexity of the sociocultural process of identities construction.

In order to find a way of looking more specifically at the lives, thoughts and personal interpretations of a Headteacher, a theoretical approach used by Valsiner (2005), which aligns with the 'communities of practice' framework was used. Much of Valsiner's (2007) research has been focussed on studying the detailed construction of social and personal identities – in particular, nationality. Individuals participated in

longitudinal studies which gathered qualitative data to look at changes, developments and emerging behaviours, emotions, feelings, interpretations and collective cultures amongst the participants. Although differing terminology was used by Valsiner (2007), the research studies took a 'community of practice' approach and mirrored ideas and approaches expressed by Wenger (1998), as explained below:

1. Valsiner's perspective is based on the idea that a person and their context are inseparable and mutually transformative. Instead of treating communities of people and individuals as separate elements that somehow influence each other, the person and his/her surrounding environment are seen as intertwined open-ended systems which depend upon mutual exchanges (Valsiner & Diriwächter, 2008).
2. In describing the dynamic interrelatedness of the individual and their contextual worlds, Valsiner used the notions of 'personal and collective cultures':

> 'The collective culture entails communally shared meanings, social norms, and everyday life practices, all united in a heterogeneous complex. On the basis of this complex, individual persons construct their personal identities.'
>
> (Valsiner & Van Der Veer, 1998, p.30).

3. In Valsiner's research, the personal identities are defined as everything that has a meaning to a person and so helps an individual to develop and construct an understanding of themselves and their identities. By helping this process of understanding to occur, Valsiner claims that individuals are able to mediate their membership with communities and collective cultures. So the assumption here is that there must be recognition that individuals (ergo, their identities) are not static and the same, but their position within a community is

constantly being negotiated and so socialisation is viewed as a dynamic process.

Valsiner's views seemed particularly relevant to this study as they brought together different approaches which gave equal importance to the context and the communities of practice, as well as the personal aspect of this dynamic and complex relationship, as highlighted in Valsiner's statement:

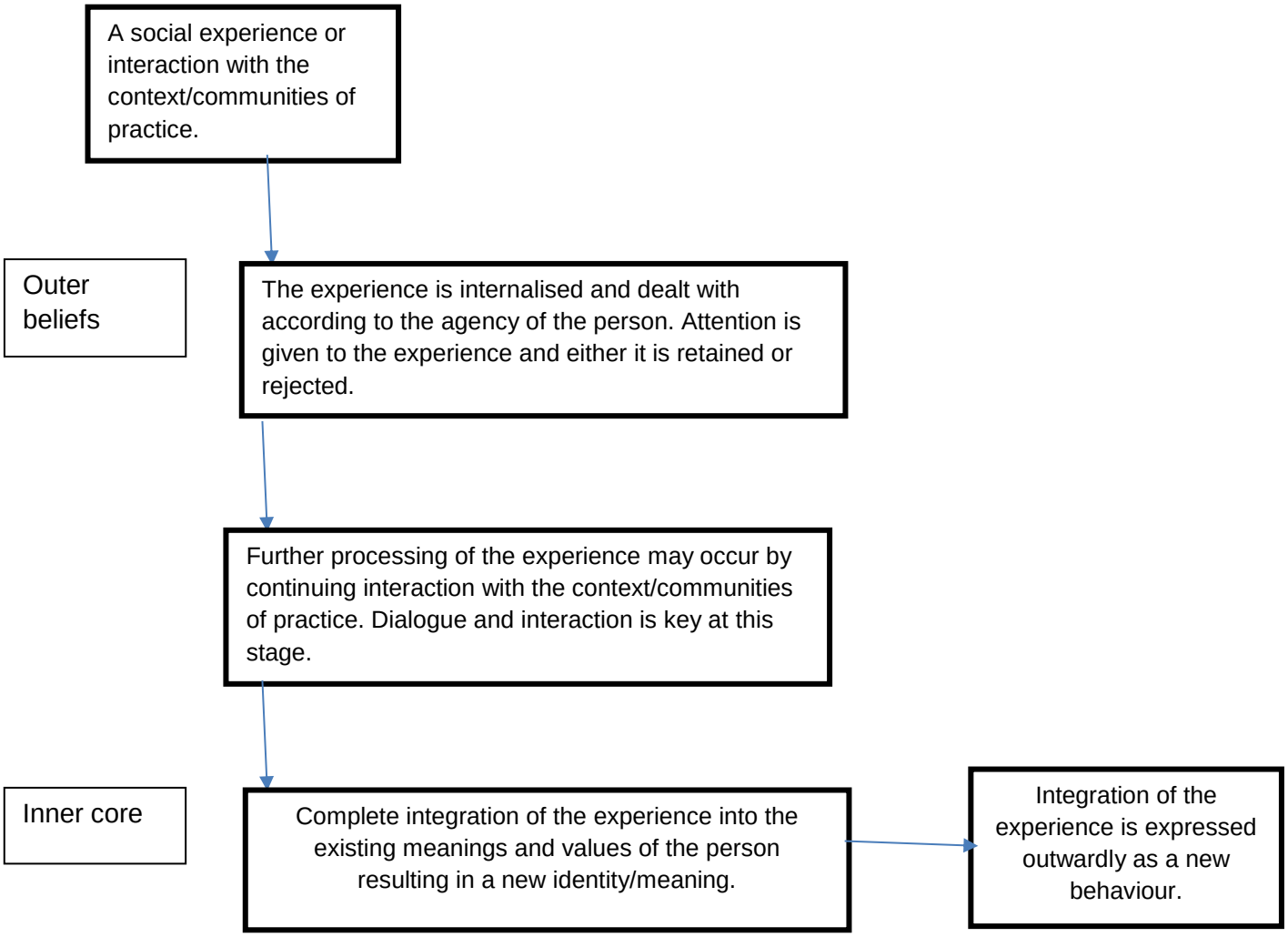
> 'Human beings are active subjects who relate to their surrounding world by way of constant construction of their identities'
> (Valsiner & Van Der Veer, 1998, p.115).

Valsiner went on to scrutinise in more detail how the process of personal sense-making occurred and what exactly went on at the boundary and the interface of an individual with their context. This detail is depicted in Figure One which is a modified representation of Valsiner's (2007, p.346) model of subjective sense-making.

According to Valsiner, the process of an individual developing or changing their identities relies on a series of layers that move from the peripheral beliefs to the innermost core beliefs of a person. Each layer is separated from the next by a barrier which functions as a buffer, similar to Wenger's (1998) concept of boundaries, and needs to be traversed by proactive engagement with the experience, the social context or communities of practice, as well as there being a process of internal dialogue. The layers generated from Valsiner are:

- Social experiences and interactions
- Internalisation through agency
- Influenced by community - rejection
  Acceptance
- Shared meanings and values
- Behaviours and routines

Figure One: diagrammatic representation of personal sense-making



Adapted from Valsiner's model of subjective sense-making (2007, p.346)

Whilst this representation of Valsiner's model builds upon the theories of communities of practice, the purpose of the diagram is to give the reader a brief insight into the proposed model and, in particular, of the process involved in identities construction. The model seemed to be relevant to this study because of the following assumptions:

1. According to this model, the construction of identities is part of a person's ongoing sense-making process (Goodson & Walker, 1991). It takes a sociocultural stance by representing the fluid and dynamic nature of the

ongoing construction of identities and the influence of changing contexts on the experience of identity development.

2. Wenger (1998) uses the term ‘trajectories’ to suggest ‘a continuous motion’ of identity formation (p.154). The model provides a snapshot of the complex process of identities construction and provides an understanding of how a person moves from past to new identities. Therefore, the model is illustrative of the construction process at a particular point in time.
3. As well as internal aspects of the identities process, the model draws together the negotiated experiences, community memberships and contexts, inherited and sociocultural influences and interactions with others, and emphasises the ‘multidimensional nature of human identities’ (Wenger, 1998, p.179).
4. The model is successful in representing the interplay between the numerous influencers of the construction of identities. In some research (for example, Ely et al., 1991; MacLure, 1993) internal and external influencers are treated as discrete concepts rather than viewing them as part of a holistic process. The relationship dynamics and interplay of influencers align with the concept of Headteacher socialisation (Beijaard et al., 2004) and the model is able to also include agency and individual interpretations.

Several researchers have used and elaborated upon Valsiner’s (2007) model; in particular. Märtsin (2008), who conducted a study to understand the changing and emerging identities of Estonian students as they relocated to the UK. The research study applied Valsiner’s model to the analysis of the students’ narratives on their perceptions of their personal and collective ‘communities of practice’ identities since their relocation. The analysis took a

grounded approach, as the themes that were considered to be significant came from the narratives as follows:

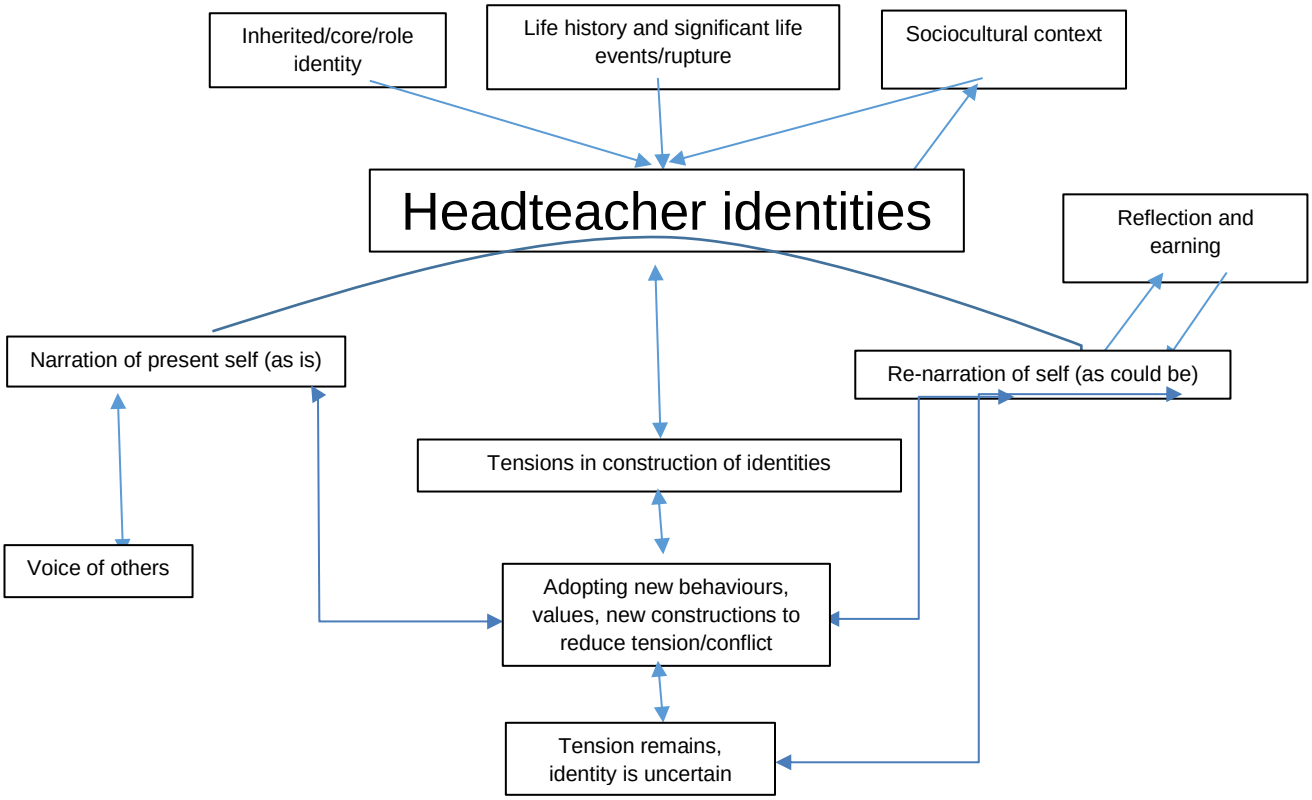
1. Themes that were inherited, historical and indicated socialisation prior to the move to the UK. These were considered embedded into the sense-making of the students and resistant to any changing.
2. Themes which indicated current socialisation at the time of the narrative.
3. Themes that were considered to be external contextual influencers (for example, the voice of others).
4. Themes which arose from the struggles and tensions that the students face in constructing their identities.

These themes were located in the narratives by looking for evidence, indicators and examples of their existence, which Märtsin (2008) called 'signs' (p.86). These signs were then organised into a table and arranged into a dynamic model.

By way of verification and triangulation, Märtsin chose to test this model in another context, namely, to gain an understanding into Muslim French schoolgirls' identities. Märtsin's (2008) version of an identities construction model seemed not only to be adaptable for different contexts, but also showed the dynamic relationships between the themes and how an individual's agency dealt with these themes. The ability to adapt the model suggested that it may be useful for analysing the individual narratives and interpretations of the participating Headteachers, their use of agency and an understanding of the dynamics of the construction of self. More importantly, the model allows flexibility so that no specific predetermined assumptions have been made about Headteachers' identities; in contrast, the model may help to make sense, analyse and interpret the complex personal narratives of each Headteacher.

Figure Two shows how Märtsin's themes could be applied to the process of identities construction of the participating Headteachers in this study.

Figure Two: theoretical model of identity construction adapted from Märtsin's (2008) model Key



The original themes for this model emerged from the narratives of the participating students. Because of this grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the difference in the participating communities of practice, there are two anticipated differences to Märtsin's (2008) model and the proposed one for this study. Firstly, I only intend to obtain a snapshot of the construction of identities at one particular point in time, rather than track changes over time. Therefore, I have not extended the model to represent the ongoing reconstruction or a reformation of an individual's identity. Secondly, I have included reflection and learning as one of the signs because many authors (for example, Kuhn, 2008; Crow, 2007; Biesta, 2006) have

documented that learning is a key function in socialisation within the educational communities of practice.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration the above discussions from the literature, the intention is to apply the framework of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), the layers of sense-making from Valsiner's (2007) model and the detailed, complex model of Märstin (2008). The aim is to produce a holistic, comprehensive model from which the Headteachers' narratives will be analysed. This has been driven by my understanding of Headteachers' professional identities, which I will apply to this study, is based upon who each of us is within the school as we interact with students, parents and colleagues. Each Headteacher constructs his or her professional identities, as opposed to these identities being something that happen to us. We decide who we are in the school, along with considering who we want to become as educators. As Headteachers, we determine the beliefs that will influence our leadership and educational practices, all while making intentional decisions about how social interactions within teaching contexts will (or will not) affect who each of us is as a leader. In my thinking about Headteachers' professional identities, I rely on Danielewicz's (2001) concept that professional identities involve our knowing who we are as Headteachers, as well as Connelly & Clandinin's (1999) thinking that we determine our identities in the process of creating stories about our lives in school. Essential to Headteacher identities is being in control of defining ourselves as leaders and an awareness of how our contexts are critical to the construction of identities.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This study focusses upon the narratives of Headteachers in all-girls' independent selective schools, in an effort to understand how they interpret their headship, construct their identities and what factors influence these identities. According to Bruner (2004), humans make sense of their worlds and the experiences in their lives by interpreting these events for themselves and for others through narrative. Polkinghorne (1988) also suggests that it is through these narratives that we link our actions together and create meaningful structures in order to understand our lives. Therefore, it is assumed that the narratives the Headteachers create will help them make sense of their lives, as well as provide me, the researcher, with valuable information and insights into the social and cultural aspects of their role (Sikes & Gale, 2006). The narrative inquiry approach adopted in this study involves the gathering of these narratives and focusses on the meanings individuals assign to their experiences (Josselson, 1995).

This study also draws on features of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in line with an approach taken in Spector-Mersel's (2010) study where the researchers framed their inquiry within the theories of narrative as opposed to following a set of procedures or methodology from the literature. This is evident in the use of Valsiner's (2007) principles in the data analysis. Prior to discussing the research methods, the next section will discuss the theoretical framework for this study, which underpins the research.

Theoretical framework

As a Physics teacher and having spent my career reinforcing the virtues of Newton and Einstein, my perspective on reality has, in the past, been embedded in the realms of positivism. The ontological perspective of positivism sees reality as 'out there', external to an individual to be 'identified, predicted, manipulated and controlled' (Laverty, 2003, p.26). This approach of an external, orderly, structured reality, traditionally utilises a quantitative methodology, one where data is judged on the basis of validity, reliability, generalisability and where findings are considered to be objective truths (Crotty, 1998). There has been much debate about the application of a positivist approach to educational research. A positivistic ontology places the researcher in an objective, and relatively distinct position, from the object of enquiry. This was not a desirable approach for this study, as the Headteacher narratives were constructed through social acts, the building of relationships and the interaction between the researcher and participants (as well as the acknowledgement of the researcher's own experiences and interpretations) and these were fundamental aspects, central to the study.

As a follower of Albert Einstein, it was indeed he who, almost a century ago, proposed that, a paradigm shift in the natural sciences should be considered. By drawing upon symbiotic hermeneutics, which focusses upon relationships within a social context, he began to reconstruct physical reality. His general theory of relativity, for example, overcame the notion that gravity is an objective 'thing', such as a wave or particle, and was instead a philosophical phenomenon based on a relationship between mass, space and time. More importantly, gravity is the result of the power of the relationship between the factors, or boundaries, which Taylor (1989,

p.64) describes as ‘horizons of significance’. It began to occur to me that, as a researcher, my ontological position must reflect my beliefs regarding the nature of reality. Furthermore, my epistemological stance should be defined in order to clarify the kinds of knowledge possible in this study and how that knowledge might be gained. Like Einstein, I realised that my view of reality had shifted as I approached the project. This was experienced as a ‘paradigm transformation’, a shift towards a more interpretative approach which endeavours to answer questions about how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Interpretivist researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the contextual constraints that shape inquiry. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005) such researchers take into account the value-laden nature of this type of research and appreciate that, although they are attempting to gain a better understanding of the subject matter, each interpretative practice makes the world visible in a different way but does not necessarily unveil the ‘truth’ (p.213).

Approaching this research from an interpretivist standpoint would suggest that reality is to be seen as a ‘sociocultural construction of the mind’ (Pring, 2000, p.47) and that it is not a stable, fixed, predictable entity waiting to be discovered (Sparkes, 2002; Sparkes & Smith, 2008). Rather, it is of multiple forms that are constructed, personally experienced and changed by individuals (Laverty, 2003). From this perspective, reality for an individual is multiple and based on their relationship to others, their ever-changing context, their individual perceptions and their interpretations of reality. Therefore, the notion of objective truth does not seem

relevant, applicable or the ultimate aim of this study.

The sociocultural perspective adopted in this research is based on the premise that an individual and society are inseparable and interrelated (Creswell, 1998) where an individual can be understood as a 'higher form of sociality' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.59); in other words, a person's self is defined and influenced primarily by social experience and interaction. In relation to identities, this might mean that they are derived from social interaction based on historical and cultural influences (Mead, 1972). Hence realities are created by individuals who are actively, and constantly, constructing a social reality that is directly affected by context (Sparkes & Smith, 2008; Sparkes, 2002). Blumer (1969) and Dewey (1938) build upon Mead's concept of identities by stating that the sociocultural perspective requires the use of an interpretative approach in order to understand how individuals and groups create their perceived realities. As postulated by Denzin & Lincoln (2005), interpretivist forms of inquiry have developed to meet the need for research that makes sense of the social world and can investigate human behaviours within it.

Some researchers working within an interpretivist approach treat the individual and society in a completely inseparable manner (Rogoff, 2002). Others prefer mutual separation 'to distinguish the individual from its social world whilst retaining their dynamic interdependence' (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 1988, p.352). The latter approach is used in this research study, as I wanted the individuality and voice of the Headteacher to be prominent and yet still be relational to their schools. The individual Headteachers' identities were not able to be studied in complete isolation from their contexts.

Drawing on the work of Bamberg & Andrews (2004), I understand interpretive, sociocultural inquiry as epistemologically nonfoundational, in that, the nature of knowledge is subjective and relative; a sense that there is no one 'correct' stance or 'truth' concerning the social world (Sparkes, 2002, p.15). As Smith et al. (2009) notes:

> 'what we come to accept as true in terms of intentions, purposes, and meanings are the result of socially conditioned agreement, arising from dialogue and reasoned discourse' (p.171).

Any knowledge claims are partial, contingent, historical, cultural, and contextually bound. Therefore, a number of features associated with interpretative research have informed this research study. Firstly, such research allows an understanding of the subjective meanings of events, situations and actions that participants are involved with and the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). This is significant in this research as the Headteachers' narratives potentially involved a variety of meanings and could be interpreted in differing ways. Secondly, it enables attention to and understanding of the contexts within which participants act, and the influence that the context has on the participants. Furthermore, interpretative research is particularly useful for identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, generating new theories and also for understanding the process in which events and actions take place. Thus, it was my aim that the participating Headteachers expressed their own lived experiences and that sense could be made of their identities based on their personal interpretations, social interactions and perceptions (Silverman, 2001).

Narrative inquiry

Denzin (1989) maintains that there are many different types of interpretative research, using a range of methods, to make sense of people's worlds and experiences. In this project, a narrative inquiry approach was adopted in order to gain an insight into the experiences of the participating Headteachers. Connelly & Clandinin (2000) suggest that this approach operates between the boundaries of personal and social spaces, locating any one story within a context. This meant that, for me, using a narrative approach would not only explore the lives and work of Headteachers within their contexts, but would also reveal the factors which influence personal decision-making and constructs of identities, something that is central to the research questions as listed in Chapter One.

Connelly & Clandinin (2000) state that 'experiences happen narratively' (p.14). In many ways this claim justifies the use of narrative enquiry in this research study. However, narratives can be defined in different ways; for example, they may be stories that correspond to sequenced events that have a meaning for a specific audience (Gergen, 2009) or which help individuals to make sense of their experiences. Narratives that are concerned with making sense of experiences, and communicating these meanings, include interpretations that shape people's identities (Polkinghorne, 1988). These stories are not always coherent, consistent or well organized. Nevertheless, the significant point here is that individuals often give coherence to their personal narrative by interpreting the wider, often hidden discourses that influence and structure their experience (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

Identities can be constructed and determined through such narrations (Sparkes &

Smith, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1988); stories of experiences in people's routine, everyday living, personal and professional relationships and work lives are useful ways of exploring constructions of identities. Narrative opens up theories and perspectives of self (Polkinghorne, 1988) and, in this study, it can be useful in examining the ways in which Headteacher identities are continually shaped, socially and culturally, and lived out within a school context with stories used as a way of fashioning selves and identities (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). I was particularly interested in the way in which the Headteachers construct and perform their identities through their narratives.

From a very early point in the research, I realised that identities could potentially be complex and not entirely 'captured' or constructed through textual forms of narrative alone. In light of this, I therefore found synergy with Sparkes & Smith (2008) who suggested that the spoken word could potentially provide greater meaning and that telling meaningful narratives involves conversation, face-to-face contact and interaction between the researcher and participant (Sparkes & Smith, 2008, p.18). The importance of an open approach is echoed by Fung (2007) who argues that interpretivist researchers cannot think of expressed life experiences and narratives merely as data simply to be analysed and categorised but a story to be maintained and interpreted as a whole. Fung's suggestion that not everything can be explained, described or captured immediately in talk also prompted me to include the use of photographic images to potentially elicit from the Headteachers a different 'voice' and, furthermore, which might be used to articulate their identities beyond that of just the spoken word.

Researchers from many traditions have suggested that incorporating visual methods into projects allows for greater insight into how people may view themselves, others and experiences that they may have within their social world (Coffey & Atkinson, 2004; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Riessman, 2008). Davis & Sumara (2005) confirm that because photographic images are a resource which is created and represents the photographer's choice and interpretation of their world. Pink (2001) also describes how photography and electronic media are becoming increasingly incorporated into narrative work:

> 'as cultural texts, as representations of knowledge and as sites of cultural production, social interaction and individual experience'. (2001, p.1).

In Pink's work, the use of visual resources allowed sensitization to potential themes, images and metaphors that formed part of the individual's narratives. Hence, this approach recognises the 'interwovenness of objects, texts, images and the dynamic of everyday lives and identities' (Pink, 2001, p.6), permits an exploration of the dynamic relationship between the visual and the textual, and helps to interpret narratives within a particular social context. As Riessman (2008, p.179-180) states, 'working with images can thicken interpretation. Images evoke emotion and imaginative interpretations'.

In this study, the primary means of generating data was through conversational interviews using various photographic images, taken by the participating Headteachers, as prompts for the conversations. This use of images and stories was something which Davis & Sumara (2005) engaged in as they analysed immigrant children's images to investigate changes in their culture and identity over time. Their theoretical premise was that there are multiple layers of meaning in any single

photograph and that the photographer had intentions and made choices to represent themselves and others in a certain way. Hence, as Davis & Sumara (2005) cite, a photograph can harbour a multitude of alternative or 'hidden narratives' (p.27) which potentially will be revealed through the conversational interviews.

Headteachers perform a variety of identities (in my case, a mother and a physics teacher, to name just two) which are products of a complex and ongoing socialisation process that are in themselves transient and subject to change. We identify what we do and who we are through the generation and interpretation of narratives dependent upon discourses, context and audiences, and through the use of images, metaphors, perceptions, and sensations. Thus, individuals create and express particular identities, as they talk/narrate, and which they continue to develop and live out through this process of narration (Ricoeur, 1991). The stories of the participants in this study are not the representations of reality but a creative interpretation, or representation, of meanings that are socially, culturally, historically shaped and lived out within the context of the conversations. The use of narrative inquiry, then, allows for an exploration of this fashioning of identities (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004) as both the researcher and the participants come together to co-construct these meanings (Riessman, 2008).

Having established the approach taken for this research, I will now outline the research design, the techniques used for sampling, and the strategies of data collection, analysis and presentation.

Sampling and access to participants

The sampling strategy selected was primarily purposive, as the aim was to select appropriate participants so that the research questions could be addressed. The sample thus comprised Headteachers serving in all-girls' selective independent schools. Moreover, the participants were also 'conveniently chosen' (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p.22) according to ease of access, as my networking and professional development opportunities took place with this group of Headteachers. There was no attempt to produce a representative sample of participants to match the Headteacher population as a whole or of the Headteachers only, from an all-girls' selective independent schools' population. It is worth noting that the convenience of the sample resulted in all the participants being known to me, which will be discussed later in the chapter. In undertaking a professional doctorate, a priority was to research my own professional practice; therefore, it made sense to work with those with whom I was professionally associated. The participant sample thus shared a professional role as Headteachers and also a common context of all-girls' selective independent schools. This specific nature of the sample meant that there was some coherence within and across the narratives (Watson, 2006).

Following a Headteachers' conference, where one of the workshops incorporated a session involving professional identities entitled 'How we become the leader we wish to be', a number of Headteachers were enthused by the concept of understanding ourselves as Headteachers. This enabled me to describe and explain my interest in the field, my intentions of researching professional identities and my ideas regarding the use of imagery and narrative. This prompted much interest from fellow colleagues, and twelve Headteachers expressed an initial interest in participating in the research study. Having first obtained consent from the Graduate School of

Education Ethics Committee (Appendix Two), I then emailed these twelve Headteachers with a copy of the Research Guidelines (as shown in Appendix Three); this not only gave the research credibility, it also ensured that the Headteachers could fully anticipate their level of participation and expected commitment to the study.

The twelve Headteachers, who had expressed an interest, all initially agreed to participate. However, as the research study progressed, the number of participants reduced, primarily as a result of time constraints; but also, notably, as one colleague stated, because individuals felt cautious about the personal nature of the research and were concerned that it would compromise their roles, identities and anonymity. These ethical issues are elaborated upon later in the chapter. The final sample of participants consisted of four Headteachers. Smith et al. (2009) suggests that ten participants may be an appropriate number for such a narrative and interpretative study. However, in order for the study to be manageable, I knew that ten would be far too ambitious a number because of the restricting pressures and constraints with my own and the participants' working commitments, and the time it would take to meet, interview, transcribe and interpret their narratives. I took reassurance from Davis & Sumara (2005) who justify that a smaller 'containable sample size' is acceptable, as it allows the researcher to fully explore, engage and integrate with the participants and ensures the collection of data is both manageable and achievable (Davis & Sumara, 2005, p.54).

Unsurprisingly, the twelve Headteachers who initially expressed interest, and the final sample of four Headteachers, were all female. Even though the research

context was largely inhabited by women, I had not set out to study an all-female sample. The chance of any kind of gender-balanced group, however, was automatically limited by the small number of male Headteachers leading all-girls' selective independent schools - less than 6% (ISC census, 2014). The four participating Headteachers were eventually selected because they were willing to take part in the research and because it was possible to work alongside them in the timeframe. All four participants were personally known to me, although this was to varying degrees. For example, I had known Headteacher A for nearly two decades and, hence, knew a lot of detailed information about her; but I had only known Headteacher B for a few months. However, I was very conscious that I needed to ensure that equal prominence was given to all four Headteachers.

The Participants

A pen-portrait had been compiled to introduce each of the participating Headteachers, as shown in Table One. Information for these pen-portraits was obtained from each school's public website, each Headteacher's public website profile, the GSA database and from details they shared with me. The detail is presented in such a way as to retain the anonymity of the Headteachers; these pen-portraits were verified and agreed with the Headteachers themselves.

Table One: Pen-portraits of the participating Headteachers

Headteacher A: Growing up in a village, in a professional household, Headteacher A attended an 11 – 18 girls-only high-performing grammar-school. Her family expectations were academically orientated and driven by several prominent reasons – namely, older siblings had attended Oxbridge and now work in Law; and' moreover' all the children in the family had a strong ambition to seek a future away from the village. Her upbringing was quite traditionally that of a white middle-England family in a rural village, with the exception that, as a woman, she was encouraged not to take on the 'female-stereotypic' roles mirrored by her mother. Social life and family activities were centred upon the Church and community village life with every member of the family having a role such as a Brownie leader, church warden and bellringer. Christianity and links with the Church were prominent in Headteacher A's life, and spirituality greatly contributed to her moral motivations, her leadership style and her personality. This community approach to life is mirrored in her involvement at the heart of the boarding school of which she is Headteacher. All the members of her own family have a role, participate in and are fully involved in the life of the school. There seems to be no barrier between her personal and physical space as boarders often come to the house for meetings, cooking lessons or to take the dogs for a walk. Their house is situated at the heart of the school campus and the sense of community is very much driven by her as the Headteacher.The only quiet haven in her own house is Headteacher A's library. Being an Oxford graduate means that a thirst for writing and reading requires this snug, calm hideaway. Headteacher A's academic background means that she is articulate and thought-provoking in her discussions. However, the vision for her school portrays a conservative educational ethos; advocating traditions, traditional approaches to learning (e.g. against the use of ICT) and the retention of historical occasions at the school. Feedback from other Headteachers who are part of the GSA, and know Headteacher A socially, describe her as a collaborative, popular and friendly individual within the networking environment of Headteachers; she does not have an ambition to be a leader or to have an official role within any professional organisation. She is described by other Headteachers as the glue that holds many social groups of Headteachers together.

Headteacher B: Headteacher B is an experienced and knowledgeable colleague who is well-known in the GSA for mentoring new Headteachers and is someone that many other Headteachers seek advice from. Despite it being her first and only headship, having been nine years in the role at her school has meant that she has a firm educational vision, is prominent as an inspector, and a committee member of several educational organisations. Her childhood was spent growing up near London, in an ambitious non-Catholic family. Living in a wealthy, upper-class, white suburb her childhood lifestyle was very much about 'keeping up with the Joneses' and about conforming to the neighbourhood.

Having attended an inner-London independent school for her entire education, she is well aware of the pressures, the local city market and the overwhelming ethos of striving for success and recognition. She was a high achiever at school - not only in academics, but also musical accomplishment and in a variety of sports. She went on to study at Oxford and seemed to be destined for the city. Indeed, having had a short spell in the City, she began her teaching career in various high-profile inner-London independent girls' schools. She appears at work in designer clothes, accessories and is always well presented.

As a day school she admitted that even as Headteacher she does not become too involved with the organisation beyond the working day. Her husband has a high-powered city role and as a result they both spend most weekends and evenings away from work, enjoying a home-life. She has no children but is very passionate about her pets and is an avid runner, often entering marathons both in the UK and abroad. Her involvement in other organisations, whilst it has enriched her headship, it has also made her frustrated and somewhat indifferent towards the bureaucracy of educational demands.

Despite leading a Catholic School she is unusual as she is of a Church of England faith. Being in London the school is multi-cultural, indeed an increasing percentage of the school roll is not Catholic. Headteacher B believes and openly will argue that she is about leading the school to success whilst the Chaplain leads the school community in faith. Hence, she does not feel that being a non-Catholic compromises her position as the leading educator.

Headteacher C: Despite being the youngest of the female participants, Headteacher C is into the third year of her second headship; her first position was in a small co-educational independent school, followed by that of her current school. She has a very extrovert and sociable character that seems to be able to hold the attention of a room, and has a very loud laugh. As a result, she comes across as very confident in her leadership and headship role, as well as being at ease with her position of being in charge and of having 'power'. She acknowledges that her personality is the main reason for her quick progress to headship.

Headteacher C grew up in the south and attended a traditional prep school, which suited her white upper-class upbringing; a girls' independent school followed this. As a result, she appears to be very comfortable and confident within the sector. Her previous headship was in a boarding school, as she liked and found affiliation from her upbringing with the boarding model. She is the third generation of the family to attend this particular prep school and could be described as coming from a privileged background. She attended university and went into independent school teaching immediately after her degree.

Promotion came quickly and she became the Headteacher of the co-educational school that she began her career in. She certainly did not follow the 'usual' path of a number of years as a classroom teacher, then middle management and, finally, senior management prior to headship. Headteacher C had not held a middle-management position. She stayed six years in her first leadership position before wanting to move schools for more experience and exposure to headship.

Throughout her schooling and university study Headteacher C was an accomplished hockey player and, in her headship, she tries to impart many of the principles of team sport. Despite her demanding and focussed role, she is still actively involved in a local hockey club. Headteacher C is single and does not have children. Despite knowing her socially, she has not mentioned a partner, and there was not an obvious occasion during the narrative conversations to ask the question outright. Although she is a Christian, religion and spirituality have not played a prominent role in her upbringing, nor in her professional life.

Headteacher D: Headteacher D grew up in the north of England, in a large, white, working-class family located on a council estate. She recounts that her drive and ambition stems from her parents who, despite their upbringing, wanted her to defy the boundaries and look beyond the estate. Headteacher D's brothers and parents were supportive of her ambitions and motivations to excel, and yet she felt different and insecure about being the only child on the estate who went to a grammar school. Her continuing battle of confidence continued at Oxford University. Her home-life did not really promote any particular religious or spiritual ethos and, although she is a Christian, she is not a practicing one, nor does religion feature in her professional role.

She went back to her roots and began her teaching and educational middle management career in a state school near her home. However, eight years ago, after over 20 years in teaching, she became disillusioned by the state sector and transferred into the independent sector with the idea of ending her career with a challenge and a different experience. Despite being in her current role for a length of time, she still believes that she is not fully confident in her ability and nor does she fit the role of a typical Headteacher. She maintains that she will not be moving to another role before she retires and is quite proud that she is the oldest of the participants (late 50s).

Based on her background and large family, Headteacher D is very community- and family-minded, but does not describe herself as religious. She is tall and gentle-natured thus portraying a 'motherly' approach to the more junior Headteachers. Education runs in the family and the ethos is lifelong learning and development. Training and development is a key theme of her headship. Her family life is not totally centred on Education and her school, as she has many interests which are dominated by her gardening and allotment.

Generation of data

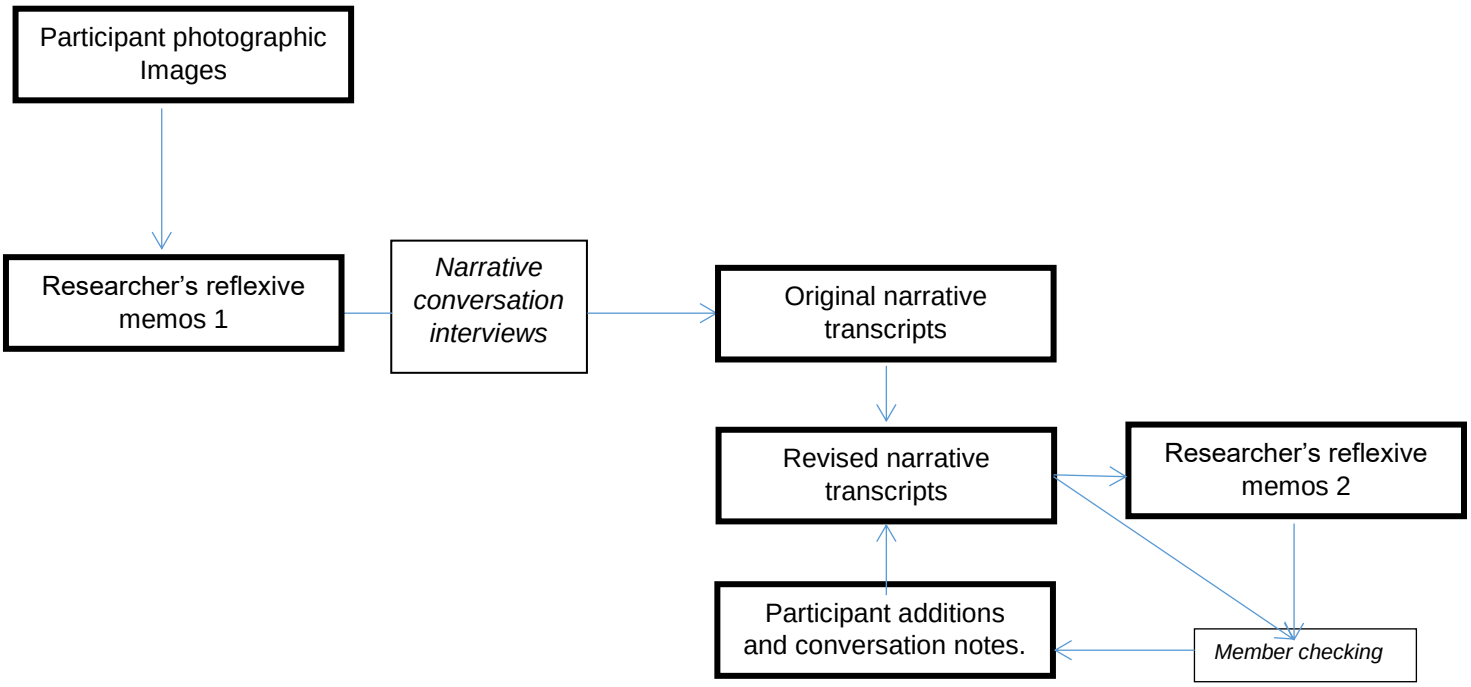
This section outlines the data generation methods and processes. Table Two outlines the methods and processes of data collection and analysis which will be further discussed in the later sections of this chapter. The study involved the participating Headteachers' generation of photographic images followed by face-to-face narrative conversational interviews which took place as soon as possible

Table Two: Outline of the methods and processes of data generation and analysis

Data generation and analysis methods	Data sources	Processes
Images were taken by the participant	Participant photographic images	
	Researcher reflexive memos 1	Researcher made reflexive memos on the images; generating initial interpretations, questions and prompts for the narrative conversational interviews.
Narrative conversational interviews	Original narrative transcripts	Digitally-recorded narrative conversational interviews were transcribed verbatim to produce original narrative transcripts.
	Revised narrative transcripts	Revised narrative transcripts were produced. This involved cleansing the original narrative transcripts by deleting hesitation phrases, false starts and repetition. It also included excluding aspects to maintain anonymity.
	Researcher reflexive memos 2	Reflexive memos were made alongside the revised narrative transcripts showing interpretations of meanings and perceptions on the narratives and methodology. As shown in Appendix Four.
	Participant additions and conversation notes.	Revised narrative transcripts with accompanying reflexive memos 2 were shared with the participants for 'member checking', and follow-up conversations took place via email and telephone. Participants checked for accuracy and appropriate interpretation of the transcripts. Notes from these conversations were added to the revised transcripts as shown in Appendix Four.
Coding of the revised transcripts using a priori and emerging themes		This involved coding of the revised transcripts based on the themes identified by three Wengerian models and those emerging from the narratives. Signs were organised into a table. This enabled the researcher to visualise the data.
Visual identities plots		Signs were arranged into visual identities plot.

following the creation of the images. Data analysis occurred throughout to form an ongoing and iterative process of interpreting a combination of data generation and analysis. Figure Three summarises how the data sources relate. The arrows show how the data sources influenced, had an impact upon or fed into each other.

Figure Three: data sources



Generation of visual images.

I have always been a visual learner and considered 'seeing' not only as a way of remembering, but also, through the creation of images, a way of relating to other people, to natural situations and a medium for expressing myself (Reflective Diary, 16th June 2012). According to Riessman (2008), the active process of creating an image is a way of making sense of an experience and a way of composing our lives. As Riessman (2008) explains, one way is not to focus upon the technicalities and how the image is produced, but on the content of the image itself. This approach to images was used for this study for two reasons. Firstly, the Headteachers would not

be using sophisticated photographic equipment which may restrict and limit the style and production quality of their images. Secondly, photography can have image particular expectations; for example, poses and photo-documentary have more formal expectations for the viewer and photographer when compared to domestic and personal photography (Harrison, 2002). In giving participants the freedom to create their own images, Evans concludes that they are more likely to be operating within the genre of personal photography. Evans goes on to suggest that personal photography is intimate and, when used for photo-elicitation, this genre can celebrate the everyday life of the photographer as well as giving an insight into personal stories. It was anticipated that the images taken by the Headteachers would adhere to this everyday personal genre.

Riessman (2008) and Pink (2009) point out that visual images, including photographs, have often been used in research, as they serve as 'constructionist tools' (Pink, 2009, p.112), providing creative ways through which research participants are able to construct their narratives. In this study, the aim of creating images was to give the Headteachers the opportunity to reflect upon their identities, their role, and to express themselves through visual means, with the hope that sense-making and interpretations of certain events might be stimulated or encouraged. Riessman (2008) continues by saying that using creative methods often leads to the participant disclosing different, richer and often otherwise unexpressed information.

This use of visual images to enrich narrative draws upon the work of Spence (1982), a visual artist and activist, who powerfully interpreted her personal experiences of ill

health through the use of visual narrative. Her production of images became the basis of her observations and reflections, facilitated personal statements and became expressions of her thoughts and feelings of what she was going through at the time. This methodology contributed greatly to Spence's own understanding of her context, and her identities as a cancer sufferer. I was particularly interested in the connection which Spence made between visuals and narratives. Referring to Spence's work, Harrison (2002) claims photo-narratives allow people to reimagine their self and their past, in order to construct new narratives. In a similar vein, Phoenix (2010) describes the process of 'autophotography', in which participants choose the images they generate, and story their meanings collaboratively with researchers. Likewise, I hoped that in this study, interpretation of and reflection on their images would enable the participating Headteachers to construct narratives and allow a far greater understanding of the construction process of their identities. Finally, and similar to autophotography, the Headteachers would exercise agency and take the opportunity to depict what they valued, which images they preferred and prioritised, how they made sense of their world, and how they perceived themselves and others (Phoenix, 2010). This further reassured me that including photographs within my narrative inquiry would enrich the Headteachers' narratives and may introduce interpretations that would not otherwise have surfaced.

The process was set up so that the participants would generate images which represented aspects of their headship experiences, roles and identities, feelings, or any feature that they considered to be a relevant part of their narrative. The sequence of research events was as follows:

1. The Headteachers' informed consent was negotiated (see Appendix Two for

further information and documentation), as discussed later in this chapter.

2. Guidance regarding the taking of photographs was provided through a telephone conversation. Unlike Davis & Sumara (2005), I allowed the participants to use their own digital photographic devices, as this proved more convenient for the Headteachers when working at a distance. It also meant that they had already 'mastered' the technology needed. Discussions also took place regarding the content of images - in particular, about the picturing of pupils (in line with wider ethical considerations and retaining anonymity within the images). The Headteachers asked extensive questions, the result of which the generation of a final series of research guidelines was circulated (Appendix Three). It was agreed that the digital images would be sent electronically to a designated and secure email address. In addition, all of the participants were to send their images through without labels, commentaries or numbering. The number of images was not specified - this stage of the data collection was deliberately left open-ended in order for the Headteachers to decide how to visually narrate their experiences (Spence, 1982).
3. As soon as the images were received, they were printed as a hard copy to be referred to and used by the researcher and Headteacher during the narrative conversations. The images were stored securely onto a designated and encrypted USB memory stick and, once the research process was complete, this was returned to the individual Headteacher. Given the need to maintain anonymity, there was no intention to publish any of the images in the research thesis; however, they were shared with my thesis supervisors (in an anonymous manner), to be explained later in this chapter.
4. Upon receiving each Headteachers' images, I had the opportunity to reflect

upon and form initial interpretations of them. This prompted questions and points of interest that I wished to discuss with the participants during the narrative conversational interviews. The act of reflection and 'memo writing' (Richardson, 1994, p.74) occurred initially with the images and at various other stages during the gathering of data and data analysis, as shown in Table Two. Reflexive memos are a way for the researcher to note any spontaneous thoughts or comments during the research process; they were recorded in my reflective diary. These memos played an important role in tracing back the development of how I was making sense of the Headteachers' narratives and were considered to be sources of data in their own right as shown in Figure Two.

Narrative conversational interviews

Bell (2005) states that 'semi-structured interviews are the most favoured method for educational narrative researchers' as they not only allow 'participants to express themselves at some length but offer enough shape to prevent aimless rambling' (p.184). However, I recognised that narratives are constructed between the participants and the researchers, and I aimed for the Headteachers to talk openly about experiences from their perspective without the constraint of a framework of questions. Bearing this in mind, I drew upon Scheurich's (1997) advice that narrative interviews are a type of conversation in that they possess few pre-determined questions and relatively little structure during the interviews. Accordingly, the style of interviewing I used is best referred to as a form of 'narrative conversation' rather than a traditional semi-structured interview (Scheurich, 1997, p.39). Whilst consideration of the images led me to generate some queries and questions, as previously

described, they were not used in a structured way, but incorporated into the conversations.

Scheurich suggests that face-to-face exchanges used in this study may be labelled as ‘conversations’ rather than interviews, for a number of reasons outlined below. Firstly, particular attention was given to developing a relationship and rapport with the participants in order to develop trust and to reduce the formality of the situation. For me, as the researcher, there was a conscious requirement to be both relaxed and alert to ongoing conversations; this dual responsibility has been noted by others - in particular, May (2002). My aim was to provide a comfortable, positive atmosphere in which the Headteachers would be happy to talk freely with minimal prompting from me. I found myself giving reinforcing signals of support by making eye contact, displaying attentive body language, smiling, occasionally nodding and making sounds of agreement. I also avoided glancing at my watch, or giving off signals that I was not listening intently or not giving importance to what I was being told. Likewise, rituals were observed - for example, informal greetings and the exchange of pleasantries, particularly at the beginning and the end of the conversations. These rituals of politeness contributed towards the collaborative and co-operative features of the narrative conversation. Laver (1981) concludes that these rituals and small talk on non-contentious topics such as the weather, children or family help to get the interaction underway and are signals to social solidarity which are important features for co-operation and collaboration.

Initially, the roles of interviewer and interviewee were very clear and began with me dictating the start of the conversation by operating the digital voice recorder and

asking, "*Perhaps if I can test the sound by giving the date and time?*" However, as the conversation progressed, I hoped that the roles of participant/researcher and speaker/listener would become interchanged. Coates (1997) maintains that, traditionally, men pursue a style of interaction based on 'power' (p.136), while women pursue a style of 'solidarity and support' (p.136) and hence there is a greater sense of collaboration. Coates further suggests that between women there is possibly greater equality and less overt dominance throughout an interview; this could be significant, as all the Headteachers were female. Finally, as Coates maintains, conversational features such as attentive listening, supportive expression and tolerance by the interviewer contributed to a more 'collaborative floor' (p.133) for the narrative conversational interviews.

My intention was to arrange the narrative conversational interviews as soon as possible after the Headteachers had generated their photographs; I felt that a short time lapse would be sufficient for reflection and yet still retain the memory of the occasion (of taking the image) and thereby maintain the momentum of the research. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the feelings and reasoning behind the taking of the images would still be recent. However, in reality, the narrative conversational interviews had to take place at a variety of intervals ranging from one week to nine months after the date of the image creation, primarily due to the challenges of time and distance constraints limiting our availability. For each narrative conversational interview, I brought several hard copies of the Headteachers' images and also the reflexive memos as recorded in my reflective diary. After the initial 'conversational rituals' (Laver,1981, p.176), I invited the

participants to begin to tell me about their photographs, following which there were no further set questions.

The narrative conversational interviews were digitally recorded, with the participants' permission, using an Olympus VN-5500PC digital recorder. The interviews were conducted in a variety of informal and formal settings. Two of the narrative conversational interviews took place in offices at the participants' workplaces and two in public venues, namely a café and a bar. No other people were present, and we were able to maintain a high level of privacy. The narrative conversational interviews varied in length and lasted between one hour and two and a half hours.

Data analysis

This section of the chapter will outline in more detail the different stages of data analysis process. My theoretical (communities of practice) and methodological approach led me to adopt some of the principles and practices promoted in the grounded theory approach developed by Glaser & Strauss in 1967. These authors coined the term 'emergent fit', which describes a process whereby there is both application of theories from the literature and the emergence of grounded theories from the participants' narratives. It was this concept/process that I was particularly drawn to in this study and so deserved greater discussion here.

Emergent fit is considered a complex, iterative process where notions from existing literature in the field and theoretical frameworks can be applied to analyse data and where grounded theories or 'themes' might also be considered to emerge from the data (in this case the Headteachers' revised narrative transcripts). Unlike the

approach described in Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original work, a full grounded theory approach was not used in this study, as no new theories were developed from applying the 'a priori' and emergent themes to the Headteachers' narratives. Hence, the application of the themes were used only to gain greater understanding and insight into the Headteachers' narratives.

The 'a priori' themes were taken from the communities of practice literature and were drawn from three theoretical models of identity construction. Firstly, the original communities of practice theory (Wenger, 1998), and secondly, two further models which were influenced by the communities of practice theory: namely, Valsiner's (2007) model of subjective sense-making and Märtsin's (2008) theoretical model of identity construction. All the 'a priori' themes used in this analysis were taken directly from these three models. Both Valsiner's and Märtsin's models are based on Wengerian communities of practice, therefore, in the presentation of the data in subsequent sections, the 'a priori' themes from both of these studies have been aligned with Wenger's (1998) communities of practice dimensions (see Table Three for more details of how these were aligned).

But these 'a priori' themes have also been added to by themes which were seen to emerge from the data itself (i.e. these are themes which do not directly come from the literature and might be considered more 'in vivo' than 'a priori'). Rather than be stored and treated separately, these themes are discussed together with the 'a priori' themes in the data analysis sections in order to allow for a holistic picture of the Headteacher's identities to emerge.

Applying the themes to the Headteachers' narratives

Coding is the process of labelling segments of data to identify key themes and patterns. *A* decision was taken to code and analyse the data manually, rather than use a computer programme; this decision was based on the view that computer programmes can distance the researcher from the data (Harrison, 2002). The revised narrative transcripts were coded by applying both 'a priori' codes from the literature but also by identifying 'in vivo' codes emerging from the data itself. These themes are shown on the analysis tables for each of the Headteachers.

Table Three: showing how the themes from the Wengarian models were applied to the Headteachers' revised narrative transcripts.

A priori themes		
Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998)	**Subjective Sense-making Model (Valsiner, 2007)**	**Identity Construction Model (Märtsin, 2008)**
Mutual Engagement	Social experiences and interactions	Critical incidences
		Life history and past experiences
Joint enterprise	Internalised through agency	
	Influenced by community	Voice of others
	Rejection	Unresolved tensions
	Acceptance	Resolved tensions
Shared Repertoire	Shared meaning	Personal
	Values	Public identities
	Behaviours and routines	Professional identities
		Behaviours

The development and use of codes drew heavily upon Glaser & Strauss's (1967) grounded theory approach, not only because it offered a flexible approach to coding but also because of the sense it makes from their perspective of working towards 'emergent fit' (p. 138). Indeed, such a notion might be considered to fit well with my wider social constructionist approach, where I was keen to examine each narrative in

detail and look at the way participants were constructing their identities and narrating the socio-cultural contexts in which they were developed (Rogoff, 2002).

Familiarisation with and cleansing of data

As previously mentioned, the initial analysis began upon receipt of images from each Headteacher. The images generated reflections and questions that were documented in my reflective diary as reflexive memos (Reflexive memos 1) to be subsequently used as prompts and signposts with the Headteachers during their narrative conversational interviews (Richardson, 1994).

The recordings of the narrative conversational interviews were transcribed, as this enabled familiarity with the content. Initial thoughts, interpretations and comments were recorded alongside the transcripts as reflexive memos (Reflexive memos 2) and are shown in Appendix Four. Due to the informal nature of the narrative conversational interviews and also having to deal with the logistics of organising visual photographs during the narrative conversational interviews, the transcripts contained a degree of hesitation phrases (e.g. *"well, um", "you know"*), false starts and repetition. I decided to use a process that Riessman (2008) describes as making a transcript suitable for 'pragmatic use' in that the conversational content was 'cleansed' as these parts of the conversation did not add anything to the research. This involved deleting repetition, false starts and hesitation phrases so that they did not 'clutter' the narratives unnecessarily. The changes suggested by the Headteachers and the 'cleansing' process resulted in a revised version of the transcripts which became the main source of data in this study.

It was at this stage that an electronic copy of this revised transcript was sent to each individual Headteacher, along with my reflexive memos (Reflexive memos 2) on the transcript, inviting them to amend or comment on any aspect of the transcript, or initial interpretations. Two of the participants added some additional details to my reflexive memos, wanting to add to and further discuss the memos; therefore, via email and telephone calls additions and amendments were made. These were eventually added to the revised transcript in Appendix Four. None of the Headteachers made any comments regarding omission or made any correction of data content.

Identification of re-occurring signs within the narratives

The revised narrative transcripts were scrutinised for evidence of the themes and these are called ‘signs’. A colour coding system was used to highlight, within each narrative, segments of data where signs occurred and how frequently they occurred, as shown in Headteacher A’s narrative in Appendix Four. As the analysis progressed coded segments were grouped in a tabular format according to which sign they represented.

Interpretation of the signs and construction of identities plots

Sparkes (2002) comments that one of the overriding aims of qualitative research is to retell lived experiences and make the worlds of others accessible to the reader. The intent of this step in the analysis process was to organise the analysis of the narratives in some way in order to produce a visual representation of the text data. Harrison (2002) stated that, whilst this type of analysis is still in its infancy, nevertheless, it is a way of explaining and making sense of the textual relationships

in an accessible and visual way. They suggested that the researcher and audience can gain greater insight into the data, as well as allowing the text to be used for critical reasoning. This final step of analysis focussed on how the signs were used by the Headteachers to develop a sense of understanding their identities. A similar process of analysis was used in research by Frank (2010) who described this stage as requiring ‘a more artful interpretation’. This process required listening to and questioning the narratives in order to gain a greater understanding by trying to identify the relationship between the signs.

In this study, the visualisation of the text and the relationship of the themes were developed into an ‘identities plot’ for each Headteacher. The construction of the identities involved the signs to be collated together to form a dynamic model. It is suggested that narrative researchers become narrators themselves as they interpret the stories of others, and then present that work to various audiences – this reflects the role of researchers in co-constructing meaning through interviewing, analysis and representation within a written report. The manner in which the signs relate to each other was through interpretation of the narratives and how they connected to the images. Whilst these signs are relevant for understanding the construction of identities for all four of the participating Headteachers, the specific ways in which the signs emerged and were dealt with differed across the four narratives. In other words, when it came to consider the identities of Headteachers, there were significant differences as to how the signs were interrelated to make a dynamic model. The plots are presented in the presentation of data chapter.

Ethical considerations

The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) outlines the principles of respect for participants, knowledge, values, and of the quality that is expected in all educational research. When considering ethical issues within a qualitative research study such as this, discussions should go beyond just preserving confidentiality, informed consent and anonymity, but also include researchers' positionality and power relationships, as outlined by Holstein & Gubrium (2000). As a member of a community of practice with the participants, I wanted to particularly safeguard against any potentially negative consequences of partaking in this study, for both the individuals and the community. These issues are also reflected in the questions asked by the University Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee when granting approval (Appendix Two).

One ethical issue to consider relates to the selection of the participants, who were all known to me and are high-profile individuals not only within their schools, but also the independent educational sector and in their local communities. Therefore, a dilemma in which I often found myself, was how to deal with the Headteachers' narratives with respect and in a non-judgemental approach, in a way that preserved their anonymity. Bridge & Smith (2007) discuss the issue of maintaining a balance and suggest letting go of judgements and reminding ourselves of ethical responsibilities to ourselves and to research participants. At times, I had to apply this approach, as several of the participants voiced experiences of inadequacy and a perception of an inability to carry out their role. My immediate reaction was to counteract their claims and to reassure the Headteachers that this was not the case. However, on this occasion, I was torn between the need to make judgements on the

information, maintaining my relationship with the Headteacher, trying to listen to their accounts and being true to my research values. I was aware of the complexity of this situation and it emphasised how a non-judgemental conversational approach was difficult to achieve and maintain.

Many interpretative studies address ethical considerations from either an insider or outsider perspective (Bridge & Smith, 2007) and consider the inherent power dynamics that are placed upon the researcher, especially if the participants are previously known. In this research, I did not position myself as either an insider or an outsider. Rather, Plesner's (2011) descriptor of 'studying sideways' seemed more appropriate, as it applies to a research project where 'researchers and their participants share professional background, shared or common vocabularies [and] bring interests to the table that both sides are familiar with' (p.471). Due to the nature of the sampling (purposive and convenience), which drew on my headship acquaintances and contacts within the sector of all-girls' selective independent education, the participants knew of me, my role and my school's context and hence I could not be considered an outsider; but neither was I an insider as I did not share in their immediate working contexts with them.

There appeared to have been many other affordances to this studying sideways position, over and above simply using my existing knowledge to recruit a sample of Headteachers willing to participate. During the narrative conversation process I was comfortable visiting various schools to meet participants and could fully appreciate the working pressures on them that might influence the conversation. I shared a 'language' and professional jargon with the participants meaning that I did not need

an explanation or confirmation of school or context-specific vocabulary. I was also able to share experiences and understandings of my own role to contribute to the context of the narrative conversational interviews, which was in line with Bamberg & Andrews (2004) non-exploitative, experience-sharing research approach based on an equal relationship between researcher and participants. All these points reinforced the notion of a narrative conversational interview as a two-way process which flowed with ease and informality. Finally, the Headteachers understood and empathised with the implications of taking part, and also how their narratives might be used and could potentially contribute to the understanding of Headteacher identities. Whilst the participants appeared to be open and willing to talk freely, and at length, this familiarity may have also caused some guardedness in what they shared with me.

I also considered the ethics of presentation, in particular - with regard to confidentiality and anonymity, the rationale being that any information and research data provided should not reveal the identification of the participants, nor the schools they lead. Plummer (1983) cautions that researchers cannot guarantee complete anonymity when participants are narrating such personal accounts, particularly when basing their experiences on working within specific high-profile independent schools. I discussed this possibility with the participants in the context that they all existed in a relatively small and selective educational sphere, and that it may be virtually impossible to achieve absolute anonymity. Moreover, I did not want the pursuit of maintaining anonymity to be of such concern as to override and distort the production of the images, nor the narrative conversations; a balance had to be found. Therefore, throughout the process I maintained an open dialogue with each

Headteacher in order to reinforce the points above and issues reflected in the documents submitted to the University Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee (Appendix Two). It was also essential that all the participants were in agreement with the content of the transcripts produced from the narrative conversations and that they were given sufficient time and opportunity to agree the data about themselves.

There was an inevitable tension between extensive use of transcript quotations, which increases trustworthiness, and the removal of certain information to assure anonymity. In some of the conversations, the Headteachers used school-specific terminology which was omitted or changed; these included the use of the generic term Headteacher, changing names attributed to year groups, staff rooms and locations within the school site. Given the uniquely personal, visual material and narratives, it was essential that the participants' anonymity and reputation was ensured as far as possible by following agreed practices and processes (Wellington, 2000; Ely et al., 1991). This was achieved as follows:

1. Real names were not included in any paperwork or in the final thesis.
2. Raw research data was only shared between the researcher, participants and my two academic tutors. Anonymous labelling (such as Headteacher A, B, C, and D), of the transcripts occurred from the outset.
3. Any potentially identifiable material was ‘member checked' by each participant before publication or dissemination, as suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.69). I fictionalised some details of their narratives - for example, place names and information about staff members - to assist confidentiality, although total anonymity could not be guaranteed. As the researcher, I was

also keen to extend my responsibility towards others; in particular, the school communities and family members.

4. An agreement was taken with the participants not to include any of the actual images in the thesis, as this may have restricted the nature and composition of the images and thus potentially distort their narratives.
5. Any hard copies of images or data were scanned, saved as electronic documents then shredded and discarded. Following analysis of the images, they were destroyed and deleted from my computer system.

Research quality

Interpretivist research does not claim to define any truth, nor to generate generalised theories of knowledge, but is often judged with criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity (Silverman, 2001). Moreover, the study is specific to four Headteachers and reproducibility has not been claimed. Lincoln & Guba's (1985) concept of transferability may be more appropriate than generalisation as this study was aimed at gaining an understanding of the construction of Headteacher identities, and thus the images and narratives were used to provide a 'snapshot' and a closer picture of each participant's experiences, thoughts and feelings. The concept of transferability is derived from trustworthiness, i.e. it is important that research is clear and transparent (Phoenix, 2010). In my study, I have attempted to be transparent about the research methods used, clear about the conditions for the creation of the images and narratives, to present the 'cleaned' narratives and to show how the themes emerged. This is important, as the concept of narrative truth is subjective and complex, and Denzin (1989) concludes that, as narratives are fictional statements about real lives, evaluation of the research quality relies on clear and transparent

processes and sound ethics.

At every stage throughout the research process, both the researcher and the participants agreed the meanings and the content of their narrative transcripts (Plummer, 1983). This meant that the narratives were confirmed by the Headteachers; such validation strengthens the level of authenticity (Atkinson, 2000). The Headteachers all confirmed that they were happy with the narrative transcripts, the representation of their identities and the manner in which their anonymity had been maintained. Riessman (2008) points out that sending the narratives back to the participants for them to review researcher interpretations and understandings not only serves as a 'collaborative dialogue' (Sikes, 2010), but also provides an opportunity for the Headteachers to reflect on the content of the narrative.

The use of the Headteachers' voices, in direct quotes, contributes to trustworthiness and authenticity, as it evidences the link between the raw data and the interpretations. In addition, I maintained a reflexive diary throughout the entire research process which included reflections, feelings and ongoing thoughts. This critical reflective writing process enabled me to examine my motives and intentions at every stage of the research, to monitor my subjectivity and contributed to the credibility of the study by making aware assumptions impacting on the findings and interpretations of the study (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

The position of the researcher

The concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the interpretations of data by the researcher are shaped by their own individual sociocultural experiences and

knowledge. Reflexivity thus requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which researchers' social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact on the research process (Smith et al., 2009); the researcher as an active participant in the research process is very evident. As Smith et al. (2009) describe, the use of reflexivity confirms that social research cannot be conducted devoid of social processes and personal characteristics; put simply, 'we cannot escape the social world in order to study in it' (p.15). Therefore, I do not consider the act of reflexivity and maintaining a journal to be a discrete method to describe in full; it is interwoven into the interpretative nature of this study. Moreover, Smith et al. (2009) see reflexivity as central to human development and construction as people reflect on themselves, their activities and what is happening around them.

Against this backdrop, my research journal and also, to a certain extent, my autobiographical positioning throughout this study provided a critical forum to record and reflect upon various issues. Additionally, it provided me with the opportunity to refer back and critically examine my own theoretical assumptions and development of knowledge in a self-aware manner. The notes were diverse and provide an audit trail: an ongoing account of the pathways taken, and decisions made during the study especially as I was new to academic research.

Although I am a colleague of the participants, I was very aware, throughout the research process, that I also held 'ascribed' power (Speedy, 1998, p.21) as the researcher, and thus had the potential to interpret the Headteachers' narratives according to my perspective. Moreover, I was familiar with all the participants and although I had difficulty in perceiving my own 'researcher' power and am dismissive

of my ‘role-status’ (Foucault, 1998, p.158), the concept of researcher presence still warrants discussion here. Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest that there is a growing body of research evidence which concludes that the sharing of personal experiences amongst professional colleagues, especially when it is a voice that is not normally heard (which I consider a Headteacher’s to be), requires a new adjustment of the power of the researcher. This is a statement I would agree with for, throughout the data collection and subsequent analysis, there was a tendency for me to underplay or disguise any power which may have been ascribed to me by the participants. Furthermore, nor did I feel that any of the participants tried to project too much power on me as cited in narrative research within the therapeutic discourse (Lofland, 1976). I believe that, particularly during the initial formal discussions with the participants, they trusted me to share in and co-construct their images and narratives. I was viewed as a ‘gatekeeper’ of their narratives and felt privileged to have achieved the ‘collaboration between the participants and researcher’ as described by Wellington (2000, p.34). Wellington also highlights the potential moral and emotional considerations associated with narrative research. This was further compounded by the participants’ willingness to speak openly to me during their narrative conversations. Their openness was in sharp contrast to what I had been led to expect from my analysis of relevant literature - in particular, those concerned with the need to foster ‘rapport’ between the researcher and the participants in a research setting (Angrosino & de Perez, 2000, p.137). As a result, my narrative positioning in this research project meant I felt a greater responsibility for needing to be rigorous and respectful of the data.

Researcher reflexivity was important throughout this study as my own experiences

and knowledge of being a Headteacher became an explicit part of the research process. In terms of reflexivity, lowering the barrier between researcher and participants enabled me to engage in a collaborative process in which I would interpret and report on narratives produced by the Headteachers, but mediated by me. I was committed to including myself within the research through the creation and use of reflexive notes. These were generated and referred to at various stages during the research, as summarised in Figure Two.

I consider that the conversations and communication between myself and the participants, prior to and throughout the research, allowed everyone concerned to fully understand the ethical implications and shared responsibilities of participating in such a research process. Similarly, whilst it is easy to obtain initial informed consent, there is no way of predicting or anticipating the possible outcomes of such research: research that is based upon exploration and discovery rather than validation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study, described the participants and how the data was collected, analysed, interpreted and represented. Ethical considerations have been discussed and issues of research quality and the researcher's position confirmed. This lays the foundation for the following chapters where I share and represent the data, analyses and interpretations that emerged in this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

My narrative

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the iterative and ongoing process of data collection and analysis which was adopted for this study. The purpose of this brief chapter is twofold. First, it intends to illustrate, and make explicit, the data collection processes used with my participants as they constructed their own narratives using photo-elicitation techniques. Here, I utilise the same techniques, but focus on constructing and analysing my own narrative (also adopting the planned analysis and construction of an identity plot – in a similar manner to that adopted for the participants in subsequent chapters). Second, in constructing my own narrative here, I seek to reflexively explore my own position within this community of practice, as a Headteacher of an all-girls' selective independent school and as someone who would potentially be considered to be 'researching sideways' (i.e. conducting research with peers on issues which closely relate/impact on my own professional practice (Plesner, 2011).

As a reminder, the rationale of the study is to answer the following research questions:

- What are the main factors which have influenced the construction of Headteachers' identities (within all-girls' selective independent schools)?
- How do Headteachers of all-girls' selective independent schools construct their identities within their ongoing interaction and professional socialisation with their communities of practice?

In order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in the research, it was decided at an early stage in the proceedings, in conjunction with the Headteachers, that 'raw' images would not be included in the final research representations in the thesis. The anonymization dilemma for visual researchers is well-known and has been debated at length. As Wiles et al. (2008) argue, this usually concerns a dilemma over whether visual images should be used because they are central to the research strategy (i.e. it is a visual research project) and because they might potentially be seen to 'say more' than words alone, or whether they should be left out because of the needs for anonymity, especially those required by institutions or regulatory boards. Some projects have used a range of creative strategies in order to work with this dilemma. Researchers in the (Extra)Ordinary Lives project (see Wiles et al., 2008), for example, used specialist digital software to anonymize images, making them appear more like oil paintings and thus removing the likelihood of identity being immediately recognisable. In this project, the decision not to include images in the final representations was taken seriously, and the final conclusion was based on the following reasons:

1. **The small nature of the research community** (i.e. small number of schooling institutions and related number of Headteachers) would mean that participants would be easily identifiable. It was recognised that this wasn't just an issue for visual research, but also for narrative clues and description. This was felt to matter, because of the prominent role that the participants played in these schools (i.e. regarded as representatives of these institutions and the communities within them) and because of the risks that any disadvantageous interpretation/misinterpretation of images might hold for their career or for the reputation of the schools that they represented. Indeed, many have

commented on the ‘business’ that private schooling has become, and the fact that they depend heavily on their reputations within an international market (Meadmore & Meadmore, 2004). As a part of this community, myself, I was highly aware of the risks of reputational damage for individuals and for the institutions, and I felt that I held a responsibility as a researcher to account for and protect against this, where possible, in the project. The teachers also put forward this viewpoint, and their participation in the project was based upon an agreement that the images would not be included.

2. **The ways in which images might travel as part of a research project and because the ways in which they are interpreted remain uncertain,** thus it was considered dangerous to allow the images to be included here to speak for themselves, but also to potentially be replicated and to travel further, used by others outside of this immediate project (e.g. through copying and pasting them from an online digital copy of the thesis). This is an argument that has been well made by a number of visual researchers (e.g. Banks, 2001; Pink, 2009; Prosser & Loxley, 2007). My decision here was made in line with Pink’s advice that we need to take such matters seriously, and that sometimes this will mean restricting their use in research representations in order to simultaneously restrict access for future interpretation, representation and use. It was also prompted by Allan’s (2011) observations of the ways in which the images in her research changed in meaning and interpretation over time, even within the same community context.
3. **The fact that the images were primarily being used as methods to prompt talk, and not solely as visual artefacts.** As I prepared for this research, I became aware of the arguments surrounding the visual nature of

visual research, and those arguments relating to the power of images (e.g. based on the saying that ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’ (Banks, 2001). However, as the research progressed, I became more convinced by the fact that the photo methods were being used as ‘elicitation techniques’ – i.e. I wasn’t using them as images in their own right, but more to prompt talk on topics which might otherwise have been nebulous, vague or abstract for my participants to narrate. Coupled with my concerns outlined above, I became convinced that it was not essential for the images to be portrayed in my final representations. Rather, I would use a technique whereby I would describe them in words and draw more heavily on the talk data that they generated. This appeared to be in line with Pink’s (2009) advice – that we often need to maintain a balance between written words and images in our final representations. Indeed, this chapter might be considered the ‘bridge’ between these two, offering the balance that Pink commends, in that it does allow for some images to be viewed and in the hope that this will illuminate the process and make the following chapters easier to access (i.e. through being able to imagine some of the images which might have been created as part of this process).

Thus, Chapter Five, the findings chapter, includes descriptors of the images, but not the images themselves. This exclusion requires some imagination on the part of the reader to visualise these images and, whilst the images might not be the principal focus of the chapter, I do not wish them to fade into the background entirely or to be considered insignificant. Including my own narrative, as a Headteacher in this community of practice, allows me to demonstrate something of this process whilst

still overcoming the identified ethical issues concerning anonymity and confidentiality (especially given the fact that I am likely to be heightened to these concerns and have more immediate control over which images are used and how they are represented).

As part of my preparations for this chapter, I undertook the very same research approach as my participants. This was a method which Banks (2001) describes as a form of photo elicitation, where images are used as building blocks to form narrative. My photo-essay should be understood, then, as more than documentary photography or photojournalism, which are often considered to be just about the process of recording and describing a situation or experience (Banks, 2001). Rather, I made use of images as a form of sense-making in relation to my experiences in my headship role – to consider the narratives that I would develop in relation to the context of these images. The process I undertook is as follows:

1. **Creating the images*:*** I created a number of images from the perspective of a Headteacher of an all-girls' selective independent school (i.e. with the same remit and same research questions in mind). The images formed representations of my feelings, interpretations and perceptions of my role and Headteacher identities. In total, twelve images were created.
2. **Reflection*:*** After the twelve images were created, there was a period of reflection on the images, in order to consider their significance for the narrative I wished to construct. A final selection of three images was made (e.g. after deciding that some were not entirely relevant, overlapped with the meaning of others, etc.). These decisions about the number of images to use for my narrative led to the guidance I provided to my participants, where I

stated that number wasn't important and that it was up to them to decide how many to generate. I decided that this was best left to the participants because, just as I had reduced them, I anticipated that they might want to go through a similar process of image selection, particularly owing to reflection on the sequence and ordering of them to create narratives.

3. **Ordering the images*:*** In my case, I did not feel strongly that the images had to be in any particular order. However, I did consider this as part of my reflections and, like Prosser & Loxley (2007), this was something that I later asked my participants to consider, too.

Table Four: an example of the reflective memos developed in relation to the images

THE TREE

- Represents change/growth
- Hidden roots, visible foliage
- Prominent on the horizon – leadership role
- Solitary role
- Bearing all responsibility

THE BRIDGE

- A way to access different approaches
- A defined route to bridge differences

THE JIGSAW

- Sense of community
- Each piece is just as important as another
- Needs to fit together in a particular way (school ethos)
- When jigsaw is complete, it creates a definite picture

4. **Memo writing*:*** Prior to constructing the narrative surrounding these photographs, I reviewed the images and made notes in my reflective diary on each image (as shown in Table Three). In writing these notes, I was not primarily concerned with the technicality of the photography. However, in using and reflecting upon my images, I did begin to question the extent to which the composition of the images was deliberate or by chance. Moreover, I began to consider the level of agency in taking or creating the photograph and

how this could potentially impact on the subsequent narrative. My memos also concerned the thoughts of others as they viewed the images as, in some cases, other people had been present when they were generated or had since viewed and commented on them. It was considered important to account for these multiple perspectives, which have in turn impacted upon my own developing understanding of the images as I have tried to make sense of them and create a narrative to accompany them.

6. **Developing a narrative:** Drawing on my reflective notes and using the images as prompts, I then attempted to generate a narrative to accompany them.
7. **Analysis:** To complete the process, in a similar fashion to that which would be expected of my participant's data, I also attempted to analyse the data and visually represent it as part of an 'identities plot'.

Of course, owing to the fact that I deliberately followed the same research process as my participants, and I was acting as both researcher and the researched, my images might be regarded as highly reflexive and deliberate, rather than having freely emerged from an entirely creative research encounter (though, in some sense, we might question how often this is the case for a number of research participants anyway, given that they will always have a particular research objective or audience in mind and that this might entirely orient the process). Regardless of this initial motive for creation (i.e. to mirror and demonstrate the process undertaken by the participants), I did find that my confidence grew in working with visual images; and the process became somewhat liberating, as it allowed me to really consider the narrative I would construct, to understand the significance of the images and to

realise their expressive potential.

By going through the process, I found that it really helped me to get a better grip on the prompts and questions I might issue to my participants, and that it helped me to understand how images may be used in a process of sense-making. In the following section, I will share the narrative I developed in relation to these images. The chapter will end with an outline of the identity plot (a thematic summary of my Headteacher identities, using the strategies I have brought to bear on my participant data).

The researcher-Headteacher story

THE TREE

When my Deputy Head saw this photograph, he immediately said:

"*That is why I do not want to be a Headteacher."*

"Why, what is this photograph saying to you?", I asked.

"*I assume that it depicts the loneliness and isolation that is so often attributed to the role of Headteacher"*, he replied, *"because you can't have friends in your role. I hope you can confide in me, but some Heads can't have that relationship with their Deputy. Who do you have confidence in? The impact of the role on your social life and family must be huge, especially in a boarding school."*

Image Two: The Tree

After this conversation with my Deputy, I almost felt guilty that I was neglecting my role because I did not feel lonely, isolated or disconnected from my family and colleagues. As a Headteacher, there are times when it does feel lonely because you are having to keep something confidential, you need to make a difficult decision or you may be struggling with an issue that you cannot talk to anyone else about. But these periods are very transient, not necessarily exclusive to headship, and might be considered an aspect of the role that I accept. One conclusion from the brief conversation with my Deputy was that I could not criticise him for having a different interpretation of my image; in fact, he highlighted the subjectivity and creative potential of using visual materials. Also, when I was a Deputy Head, I sensed that I was answerable for everything but responsible for nothing; yet, as a Headteacher, one has that sense of responsibility for the overarching health and wellbeing of the whole school.

For me, the tree image depicts where I started, back in the 1980s. Throughout most of my schooling and university studies, I wanted to be a policewoman, an ambition driven by service to others, the need to have an 'action-packed', challenging and varied lifestyle, as well as being able to push the boundaries in terms of being a woman in a man's world. My interviews went well, but they wanted me to join the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, not the highly-prized Metropolitan. Feeling deflated, yet knowing that in order to fulfil other ambitions I needed to be in London, I enrolled on a PGCE course. I remember my father saying, in an attempt to justify my decision:

"*Surely, in London, being a teacher is the same as a policewoman, anyway."*

In many ways, how true that statement was. As I look back over my thirty years in education, the core value that has become central to my professional and personal identities is responsibility, "*because what you do impacts on others*" (Reflective diary, 2015). Early on in my career, I considered that it was an apparent lack of responsibility amongst teaching colleagues in the maintained sector which was to blame for the little respect that the teaching profession received, hence my move to the independent sector after four years of teaching. As I progressed through various management roles, I had times when I was deeply worried about the impact that this lack of responsibility had on learners and, at times, I became frustrated (and still do as a Headteacher) that ill-prepared teachers provided few favours to our profession and our respective identities as teachers. This deep-rooted value allows me to construct my own values as a professional and to develop continuously without fear of change. It also brought with it a deep joy for learning.

The tree was used to symbolise the fact that I am very aware of my responsibility and am willing to stand tall, alone, accept accountability and the consequences of my decisions and actions. In the same way, the tree complements the landscape by being a natural feature which grows and changes with the view. In this sense, I am using the image to suggest that I do not wish to 'lord' it over the school, but am a complementary (even if prominent) part of the school.

A fundamental feature of a tree is its roots, which 'ground' the plant, maintaining its stability and keeping it alive. I often reflect upon some of the negative aspects of my role, and the only way that I am able to cope with the responsibility is because I believe and feel that my values are solid, uncompromising and keep me 'grounded'

in my role. As a result, I almost thrive on the level of responsibility I am expected to bear in my position, and I no longer resist the idea of being a Headteacher.

In conversations with my Deputy Head, I also came to understand the tree as representing my approach to the chaotic features of my professional life – hence the need to maintain a strong sense of agency in order to develop the capacity for self-construction. For me, agency is about empowerment to resist and challenge impositions to my identities and to embrace what I feel is critical.

The tree is an iconic and staple feature of a landscape, and so I, too, see my identities as having become relatively stable compared to the changeable and chaotic world about me. It seems that by operating repetitive behaviours and practices, my identities have become prominent and have developed a coherent structure. Even though teaching was not the first career choice for me, I nevertheless fell in love with the profession, and I gained the confidence and strength to persist in the role of Headteacher.

THE BRIDGE

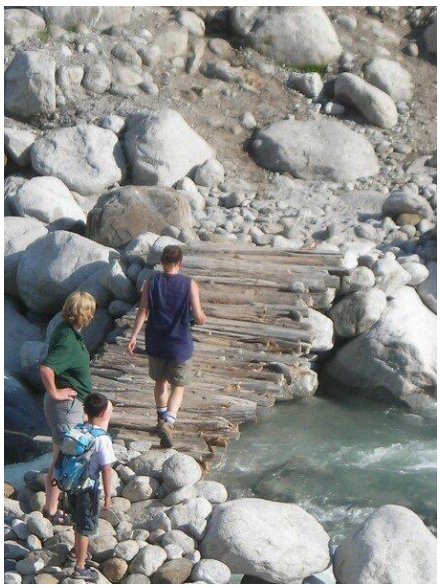


Image Three: The Bridge

This photograph was taken whilst I was leading a trek in the Himalayas – an activity I gain great satisfaction from, and a country I have great affinity for. I wanted the image to represent a dichotomy I often struggle with as a Headteacher in a traditional independent school. Namely, the dichotomy between traditional ways of teaching (i.e. in an independent school that is steeped in historical practices) and my own educational philosophy which is liberal in approach and focussed primarily on opportunities, independent thought and individualism. I often find that, throughout the academic year, there are tussles between these two different approaches which results in some confusion and uncertainty for me.

I often narrate my previous experience as a learner as having taken a relatively deterministic and singular route. This would seem to be at odds with my current Headteacher identities which (as explained above) feel as though they are created in interaction with other people and the environment. In my role as an educational leader, I want to be viewed as a person rather than as an example of a historic 'deterministic educational construct' or practice. The bridge signifies the two opposing and extreme ends of this dichotomy, between my learner and leadership identities. I seem to have to take up a position that straddles both sides; I need to negotiate the modern and traditional - the present as a Headteacher and the past as a learner. I interpret my position on the bridge in two ways: firstly, as an indication of the change throughout my career; secondly, in terms of how others perceive me. This is an indication to others and myself that I am bridging the boundary between two differing viewpoints.

Indeed, in my attempt to implement a progressive educational discourse, which

emphasises experimental and interactive child-centred methods, I still need to be mindful of my background and also the foundation of the 'traditional' independent school that I am leading. My position on the bridge is an indication and a reminder to others within the school community (including staff, pupils, governors) about the variety of discourses which come into play and which may be given priority at any one time. I feel that by bridging these gaps, this might be one way in which Headteachers are able to take on these dichotomous and contradictory roles, so that they can embrace their own values and those of the wider culture and environment of the school.

Of course, at times this can be complex and confusing. It can leave me unable to navigate the course easily (i.e. unable to decide which discourse to take up), causing some disruption/discomfort in my own sense of identity. Thus, the bridge image also recognises my emerging feelings about my own identity depending on and merging with that of the school, as I attempt to negotiate and influence the organisation to effect change. This strong sense of my own limits and boundaries on my individual agency does, at times, cause some resentment.

THE JIGSAW

Image Four: The Jigsaw

As soon as I began my work as a Headteacher, I started to vividly imagine and work towards what I thought the 'ideal Headteacher self' would be. On reflection, however, I realise that there were times when I struggled to achieve these unrealistic goals and when I felt insecure inside my office "*behind the Headteacher's desk*" (Reflective Diary, 2016). My nerves calmed when I appreciated the true complexity of these experiences and the never-ending cyclical process that shapes a Headteacher's sense of self. But this takes time and concerted effort – a need to continuously reflect, construct and reconstruct every aspect of one's identity. Over time, I have come to understand that this means that I need to make the most of opportunities, to familiarise myself with a broad diversity of experiences and to develop some key values. This process has not always been a positive one and, at times, I have felt dissatisfied with my performance. The complexity and size of this process, I feel, is depicted in the image of the jigsaw (both in terms of its size and the number of pieces).

To provide just one example of an overriding fear that I have attempted to navigate in my time as a Headteacher (i.e. one piece of this complex jigsaw puzzle), I might talk about the fear that I have experienced in *becoming* a Headteacher; that I would lose touch with the wider community and become estranged from learning and learners (indeed, this is a common narrative in Headship – those who can't teach, lead – as well as in wider management circles). For me, the interaction with learners was considered central to who I was and could be. In my reflective diary, I had commented on this and how rewarding it could be:

"I am learning something with them; even learning about my personal identity which,

however hard, I try to leave outside the school gate".

Over time, I have come to recognise the different and distinct ways that learners influence my identities. This was also something I made note of in my reflective diary when I contemplated the jigsaw image. I recognised that:

- having an influence on learners is a real motivation to be continually improving practice, which creates a great sense of responsibility.
- young learners provide more obvious feedback and reactions to situations,
- which provides a deeper understanding of my professional self, as this allows me to gauge how others perceive me.
- the learners' experiences become a source of reflection which can, in turn, shape my own identity formation, e.g. experiencing different classes and learning styles.

These are aspects of my experience as a Head which I continue to reflect on and learn from, but which I simultaneously struggle with as part of this wider jigsaw.

A note on analysis

In order to fully work through the research process, in a similar manner to my participants, in the final section of this chapter I will present some of the analytic themes that have been developed through a process of thematic analysis. These themes have been generated by looking across the data sets, just as I did when I analysed the participants' data. The table below outlines the themes that I found to be emerging from the narrative conversation (albeit including one that I held with myself, and which took place mainly through written memos, rather than the more formal interview conversation which was held with participants). A similar table is

used for each of my participants (found in the next chapter), in relation to the data I present on them.

Table Five: Summary of the themes and signs from my narrative

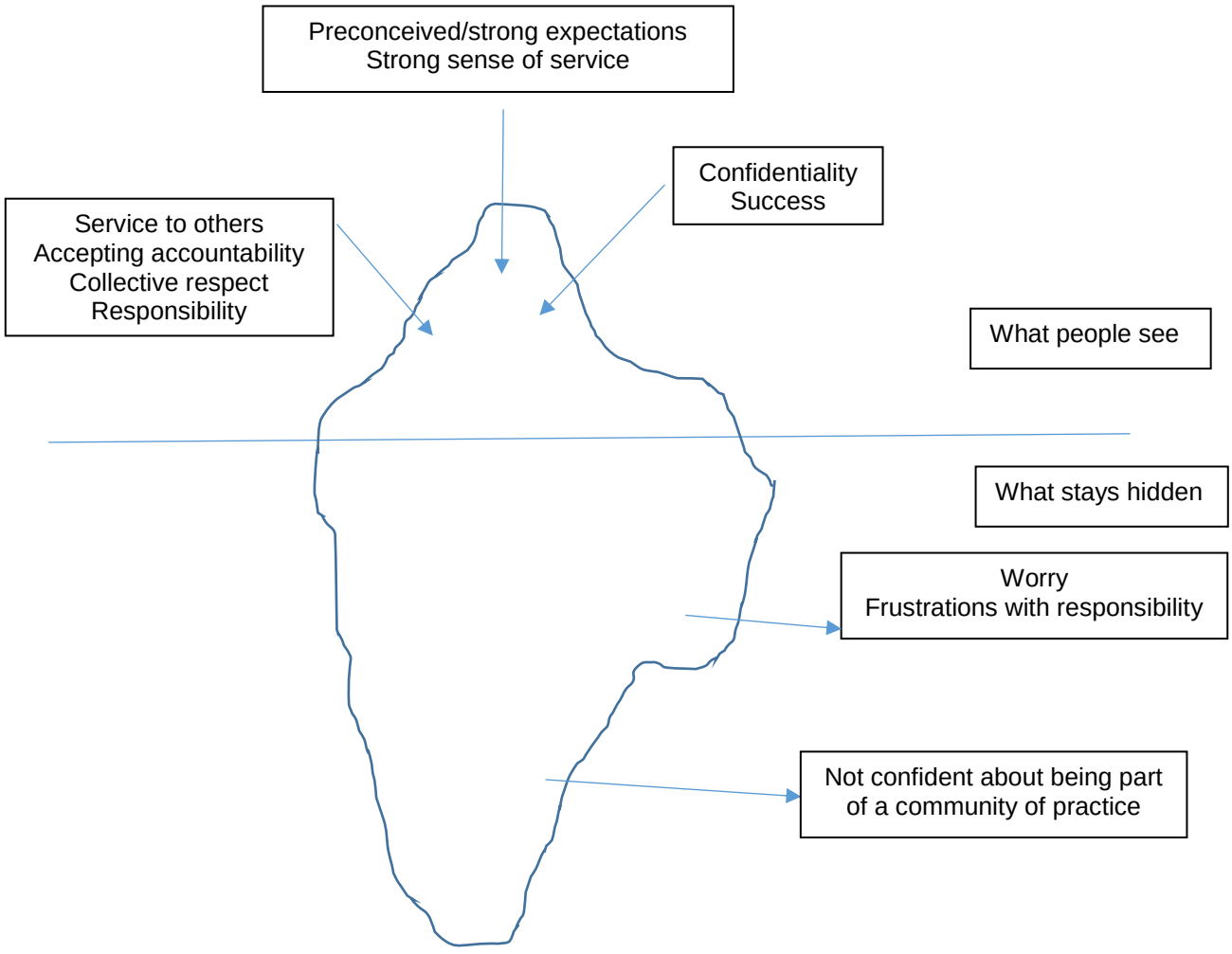
A priori themes			**InVivo themes**	**Signs of the themes**
Communities of Practice. (Wenger, 1998)	**Subjective Sense-making Model. (Valsiner, 2007)**	**Identity Construction Model. (Märtsin, 2008)**	**From Headteachers' narratives**	
Mutual Engagement	Social experiences and interactions	Critical incidences		
		Life history and past experiences		Strong sense of helping Deterministic learner Perceived expectations
Joint enterprise	Internalised through agency			Compliment others Strong sense of agency
	Influenced by community	Voice of others		Influenced by external factors and context of school Expectations of others Influenced by voice of others
	Rejection	Unresolved tensions		Frustrations about responsibility Frustrations with learners Not forced to be part of a community of practice
	Acceptance	Resolved tensions		How to accept affirmation of position by myself and others
Shared Repertoire	Shared meaning and values	Personal identities	Hidden identities	Underlying joy of learning Solid inherent and grounded identities
		Public identities		Connected with family and friends Collective responsibility and respect Accepting accountability, can stand alone Coherent structure to organisation Traditional values
		Professional identities		Modern educational philosophy Worry about lack of responsibility in profession Conformity and forced identities
	Behaviours and routines	Behaviours		Confidentiality and reflective behaviours Service to others

The themes are not elaborated on here, mainly because telling my story is not regarded as the central aim of this thesis. The themes do indicate the directions in which my story could be taken, however, and I end with an 'identities plot', as I do for my participants, as a way of drawing some conclusions on my assumed position within this community of practice.

My identities plot – the iceberg

The main aim of the identity plots included in my research is to enable the reader to visualise the dynamics and the relationships between the various themes generated through analysis. I include my own plot here, in order to provide an example of this.

Figure Four: my identities plot



My chosen model for my identities plot is that of an iceberg. Indeed, it became evident from the analysis of my narrative that many of my themes were about 'hidden' thoughts, feelings and phenomena. Only some of my experiences, values and perceptions had been allowed to 'surface'. This interpretation seemed to align with the visual model of an iceberg.

Conclusion

The iceberg identities plot might be considered to depict the decisions and choices that I make in determining which aspects of self are made visible and which remain hidden. In some sense, this might be considered even more meaningful, given the power that I have had here as both the researcher and research participant – even in the narrative shared here, I have taken control and carefully selected which aspects of self can be shared. I have taken authorial control, and some could argue that this is in a way that is not available to my research participants, hence why I feel it is all the more important that they gain as much control as possible over the use and interpretation of their images. If I were to take the analysis of this identities plot further, I might ask questions about how much of my 'Headteacher identities' is submerged and how much is allowed to be public. I might also ask which of these might be considered negative or detrimental (e.g. is there a reason why the hidden aspects are not told; would this be detrimental to me, my status or my positioning in the community?). I might also begin to ask questions about whether all Headteachers experience this sort of divide in self, between the assumed personal and professional, and I would attempt to connect these experiences up with those presented in the wider literature.

But this is not my task here. My task has been to help the reader better visualise the research process, to actually see some visual images and how they have been put to work in the research. The chapters which follow are absent of images. As mentioned previously, for ethical reasons, I have chosen instead to ‘paint’ these pictures in words. Yet it is the narratives that emerged from these images which will be the focus of this chapter, as I work with them to make sense of their own Headteacher identities.

CHAPTER FIVE

Presentation of data

The presentation of data begins with application of Valsiner's (2005) approach to the narratives, as described in the previous chapter. A tabulated summary of the themes and the associated signs are initially presented, thus enabling the reader to quickly and easily become familiar with each Headteacher. This is followed by the multilayered and 'messy texts' of each Headteachers' narratives, including representations of their images, excerpts of the participants' narratives and interpretations from myself and the Headteachers Cohen et al. (2000, p.182). This use of the multilayered nature of images and texts contributes, according to Cohen et al., to the complexity of narratives. Finally, the construction of the identities plot and commentary concludes the presentation of each Headteacher and aims to show the relationship between the different themes and also account for the dynamics between them.

The narrative conversations are presented Headteacher by Headteacher, rather than using a cross-analysis; each narrative is unique, so there seemed to be no validity in making a comparison between the Headteachers. Moreover, Silverman (2001) states that keeping narrative data intact and whole is best suited to obtaining a critical understanding of practice. Hence, presenting data in this holistic way will bring the researcher closer to the practice and, as a consequence, the identities of Headteachers.

Representing Headteacher A

Coding of the revised narrative transcript

The application of themes adapted from Märtsin (2008) were applied to Headteacher A's narrative is shown in Table SIx, along with the signs (evidence) extracted from the narrative transcript. On receiving the image, I was somewhat uncertain of how to proceed, as only one image had been generated. This surprised me, as I could not predict how a single photograph would portray the complexity of a Headteacher's multiple identities. However, as this was my first narrative conversation, I reflected upon whether I had explained my research sufficiently and whether the apparent lack of images might result in the amassing of very little useable data. Nevertheless, I progressed to the narrative conversation with a positive, open-minded approach and felt that I had to fully trust and rely upon the participant.

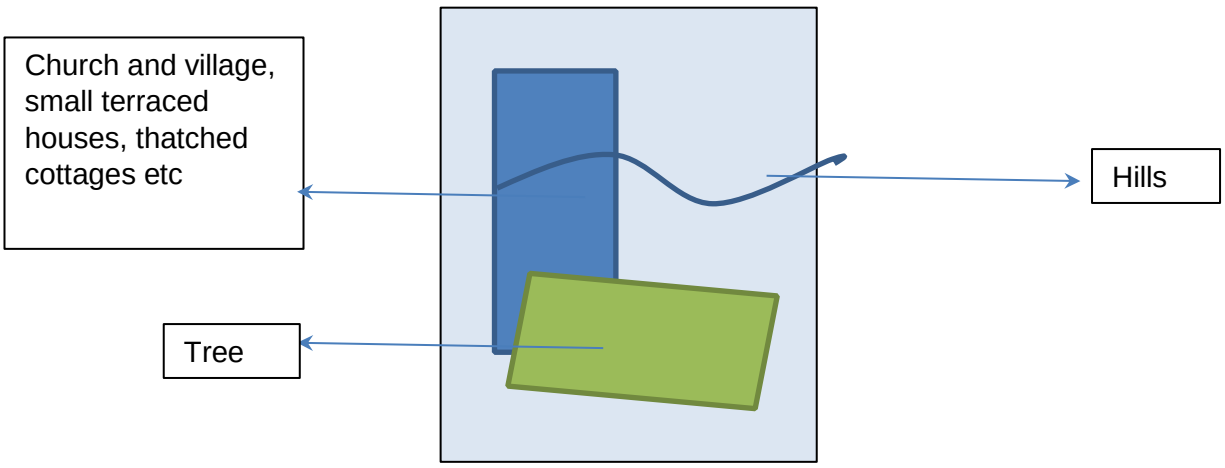


Figure Five: representation of the single image created by Headteacher A

The narrative conversation took place in a café at a conference hotel. The very public venue did not, in any way, deter Headteacher A from being very forthcoming and eager to share her narrative. Indeed, very quickly into the conversation, I was

reassured that the single image was sufficient to encapsulate the complex and multifaceted aspects of her identities. Headteacher A was reflective and earnest, and used the photograph in two prominent ways to narrate her story. Firstly, the objects

Table Six: Summary of the themes and signs from the narrative conversation of Headteacher A.

A priori themes			**Emergent themes**	**Signs of the themes**
Communities of Practice. (Wenger, 1998)	**Subjective Sense-making Model. (Valsiner, 2007)**	**Identity Construction Model. (Märtsin, 2008)**	**From Headteachers' narratives**	
Mutual Engagement	Social experiences and interactions	Critical incidences		Unsuccessful interviews
		Life history and past experiences		Experience as Deputy Head
			Current description of identities	Layered – onion-like Holistic Interconnected
Joint enterprise	Internalised through agency			
	Influenced by community	Voice of others		Reacting to others' behaviour Discourses of the school Colleagues' expectations and perceptions Ethos and expectations of the community
	Rejection	Unresolved tensions		Other priorities and a busy professional life Rarely reflecting on oneself, trying to be someone the school wants
	Acceptance	Resolved tensions		Finding scrutiny of identities a challenge Difficulty in conceptualising identities Insufficient vocabulary Lack of confidence Uncertainty of which identity is 'speaking'
Shared Repertoire	Shared meaning and values	Personal identities		Moral compass Determines emotions Determines and is influenced by ethos of the context
		Public identities		Community identities Identity of being a wife and mother Identity she is confident in not being influenced by context
		Professional identities		Influenced by external factors and context Expectations of others Influenced by voice of others Conformity and forced identities
			Core identities	Stable foundation/being confident Part of 'me'; being true Constant presence Determines agency, chooses which layer to reveal
	Behaviours and routines	Behaviours		Reverting to the safety of the core identity Reflective practices and thinking deeply Having a coach, learning and developing Networking on emotional level Drawing on memories Tendency to just act without thinking

depicted in the image were used metaphorically to bring her narrative alive, thus accessible to the researcher. This metaphorical use, and the personal significance of this location, explained why she had not used an image of her school or even an image associated with her professional context or education. As a result, she was able to narrate her identities both within the sociocultural environment of her school and her professional role as a Headteacher. Moreover, the use of an image of a landscape that held special memories and meanings allowed her to introduce feelings and emotions into that narrative. She described it as *"being a safe place which was familiar and hence gave her confidence to face new situations and the unpredictability of the role".* She also used this familiar and *"comforting"* location as part of her reflective process in reconstructing her identity, as her emotions towards the location enabled her to *"restore and renew myself"*.

Secondly, she explained an ordered sequence through the image; objects in the background represented her past experiences whilst those in the foreground of the image explained her current existence. She wanted the perspective of the image to mirror her journey through her personal experiences and the evolutionary aspects of her identities, *"layers of me"*, so that the tree in the foreground showed *"the true me or my core identity which is the final outer layer".* She mentioned, on several occasions throughout her story, how her identities had evolved and *"moved forward"*, which is in line with identities not being stable, fixed entities but unfinished, transient processes. However, this evolution of her identities retained a *"common thread"*, as highlighted by her comment:

"The houses signify the holistic meaning of a community; by which I mean, the connectedness between people in a school, the connectedness between our

identities and who we are, or try to be, and the connectedness of my identities because, surely, I don't just completely change, but must retain a core part of one particular identity – they must be all connected in some way".

Headteacher A did admit that she was finding it difficult to strike the balance between *"matching the image to her identities and/or artificially making her identities fit the image".* She had initially wanted the content of her image to depict her identities – *"My identities came before the image. If you like, I was the person with those identities that took the image – my identities created this picture".* However, during the narrative conversation, she admitted to almost *"justifying"* the content of her image by making her identities *"fit the image"*. At times during the discussions, she became confused and unsure, which she admits was due to the *"need I have"* to make the most of the image – *"Maybe I am determining myself according to the picture and not by who I really am. But then, doesn't that happen anyway; your identity is influenced by other people and other aspects of your role?"*

Despite the fact that Headteacher A's lack of occasional coherence between her identities and the image could potentially compromise the trustworthiness of the data, as discussed in the previous methodology chapter, I decided to retain the holistic and interconnectedness of her story by following her narrative through the perspective of her image. Her story begins with the landscape at the rear of the photograph and her identities are storied forward through the image, to end with the tree in the foreground. She had considered portraying aspects of her identities through a series of multiple images she was eager to show the role:

“where there are no boundaries or divisions and where there are no separate or discrete tasks or approaches that mean this is what being a Headteacher is all about”.

The motive to retain a holistic approach was also confirmed by further comments such as:

“There are parts of the school and my role as Headteacher that are interrelated and one of the same thing … it is important to portray this oneness, but I do not know if it is the school that is the driver of this linkage or the role. Is it my identity that is driving this or am I fitting myself into the ethos and values of a particular school?”

The main body of her story began with a description of the overview and by portraying a metaphorical picture of how she perceives her identities being constructed, and existing together, in a holistic manner. The metaphor she used was that of an onion with layers that can be peeled back to reveal certain types of identities. This *“peeling back to reveal bits of my identity”* could be *“either I choose to use an aspect of my identity that is not normally exposed, or an aspect of my role forces the onion layers to be peeled away. Either way, I would like to think that I had some control over this”.*

Whilst she did not further expand the use of this metaphor, some of her later comments revealed further inclusions:

“*If something is not right, then the layers can be peeled back over”.*

“There may be layers that I would not want to expose again for lack of confidence or from knowing that they do not work … have I taken this metaphor too far?!”

This suggested that the layers could grow over again to hide or keep hidden a particular identity when it was not appropriate. Thus, possibly, indicating that she does believe that there is a sense of agency in determining, choosing and managing her identities. However, contrary to this, there was a strong sense of external factors influencing and also determining her identities, indicating a combination of personal agency and the sociocultural construction of identities.

Her story continued by first referring to the hills, in the background of the image, which she describes as the small *"hurdles"* that she has had to encounter in her earlier life: *"We all have mountains to climb, but I prefer to call them small hills, as when I look back, the effort needed to overcome difficulties is insignificant compared to the hurdles now".* Other than this reference, very little was mentioned in terms of a critical incident or historic events that have shaped and moulded her personal or professional identities. This surprised me as Headteacher A's interview was the first narrative conversation conducted, and I had anticipated that the narratives would primarily be a historical telling, or recounting of past experiences, notable events and/or how they have informed the current identities. Several events and situations were mentioned, but they were almost dismissed or discarded as being insignificant.

Working in other schools and developing her skills and knowledge to become a Headteacher were mentioned, but not elaborated upon. However, previous employment and positions were intermittently referred to as being influential in moulding and forming her underlying fundamental beliefs and values, which she considers an important aspect of her identity and how her identity manifests itself through her behaviours, actions and decision-making. Whilst her story began with

the hills and historical influences, she made it very clear that she wanted to firmly place her narrative in the 'here and now', thus presenting a present-day account of her identity rather than a historical one.

A large part of her chronicle described the significance of the village; in particular, the church and the houses through which a community and external identity manifested itself. Throughout this, there was a high level of conformity and 'forced' commentary in that she portrayed identities which were either *"expected of a Headteacher"* or *"one that reflected the ethos of the school".* This was further reinforced by many of her reflective statements:

"I think other people contribute hugely to how we perceive ourselves and decide what our identities are";

"behaving Headmistressy".

She used a cluster of white terraced houses as a metaphor for her external identities and her relationships with other individuals. Whilst describing the buildings, she said:

"Not only do we try to conform (for example, paint our houses a complementary colour or keep our gardens tidy, or put the recycling out on the same day), there are things that are expected of us when we live within a certain community … it is about living in a community and having an identity for that community".

It was in recounting this layer of her identities that she exposed some subjective factors which she felt influenced all the layers and, possibly, a 'core identity'. It was based very much around the pressure to conform, to meet the expectations of others and to live out the ethos and values of the school.

Her narrative then moved onto what she called her *"personal identity*". This layer was discussed very briefly; she seemed anxious to quickly move onto other things. She used the church in the image to relate to external factors that gave her what she called her *"inner self and my moral compass".* She felt that her personal identity *"is a tried and tested source of knowing and also gives us a structure which encourages us to try to understand and interpret ourselves … it is moulded by our core identity but, in turn, it shapes how we are to the world".*

The final aspect of the narrative was focussed on the significance of the tree in the foreground of the picture. This part was very useful in bringing together and summarising all the facets of her identities. Headteacher A expressed a belief that there is a *"core identity"* that is stable, personal and unchangeable, despite earlier in her narrative describing identities as an evolving process.

"It is formed from when you are born and gives you the concept of who you are in terms of gender, race and your value systems".

She referred to this core identity by describing how she had been unsuccessful at interviews because she was *"trying to act and be someone that I thought they wanted rather than be true to myself and retain the strong sense of who I am".* The description for the core identity, using the metaphorical tree, continued as Headteacher A felt that it was a key aspect of her overall construction and perception of her identities.

"The tree is like an iceberg in that there are so many roots and inner workings that are hidden from view, and there are many aspects of me that people and even myself will not have seen; I suppose, in many ways, this is what I mean about the

core identity in that its impact is not always seen or appreciated, but also it is at the heart of all of the other layers of my various identities. In fact, I know it exists but cannot always explain how it impacts on the other parts of me".

The core identity is seen as static, fixed and untouchable in that the *"trunk of the tree is the same, but the amount of and composition of the leaves change year on year"*, and yet it is something that impacts and influences other areas of her identity consciously and unconsciously; consciously, which she describes as the 'light', and unconsciously, the 'shade' that a tree presents to the world. Whilst her core identity forms the inner layer of her 'onion"', she also refers back to the unseen and unconscious aspect of this core identity, confirming that the core identity should exist at the centre of her onion, yet its influence is felt throughout the layers.

Headteacher A perceived that her "*core identity"* could be threatened or destabilised and yet, because it was hidden and protected by outer layers, it was somewhat protected from change. However, she did highlight that the main threat to her identities were other school and non-school priorities, and the pressures of her role. Moreover, a lack of reflective time, and the opportunity to consolidate and evaluate her role, feelings and actions resulted in her lacking in confidence as to who she is and whether she is who she wanted to be. She expressed that the accumulative effect of these threats prevented her from being totally certain of some of her identities, such as her identity as a mother and wife in relation to her identities as a Headteacher. She was often uncomfortable in discussing and articulating her *"other*" identities.

Despite Headteacher A being very confident and conversing with ease about the image and how it metaphorically represented her identities, she seemed, at times, to have difficulty in constructing and interpreting her identities, with a number of contradictions becoming evident. In particular, these occurred between identities being portrayed as a stable, autonomous concept and one that emerges as a result of discourses within her school; a reaction to situations, other people or personal reflections. Much of this lack of clarity she attributed to the conversation being the first time that she had verbalised and explained her identities, for she had not realised that *"she had the vocabulary and ability to express herself".*

As well as a lack of confidence in her ability to verbalise and explain what she wanted to articulate, she also expressed a concern (often apologetic, seemingly needing constant reassurance) that what, and how, she was doing was exactly what I was interested in. Of particular concern to her was whether or not she was providing *"what I was looking for"* in the research, or *"was this the sort of thing I was expecting"*, as if there should be a predetermined or *"right identity for my study"*. I tried to overcome this uncertainty by being relaxed and reassuring, offering signs of active listening and referring to the image as much as possible. *"I hope what I am saying is proper data for you, rather than just waffle".* Headteacher A expressed how, despite finding the exercise difficult to articulate her identities because of *"other tangible priorities and the busyness of life",* she had benefited from and enjoyed the period of reflection and contemplation that the exercise had offered her. This insecurity and uncertainty of how Headteacher A should use her image was also confirmed by the comment:

"I had an overall idea of what I wanted to create, but also more ideas have come out

of seeing the image".

It was noticeable that, as the narrative conversation progressed, it became less and less a passive telling but more an activity of thinking aloud, of problem solving and unpicking reflections to determine her future direction. It became noticeable that, throughout the process, she began to move towards actively questioning and challenging her understanding of the meanings of the image – in particular, the symbolic representations the image had for her, rather than just the telling. Her narration was purposeful in terms of trying to work out where she was and, at times, where she was going and what she wanted to achieve in her life, particularly in relation to her relationships and the values she wanted to promote.

The identities plot and commentary

The steps of analysis were combined to represent the identities plot which is depicted in Figure Six. The role of the plot is twofold: firstly, to highlight the influential sociocultural themes and, secondly, to show the dynamics between the themes. The relationship between the themes and Headteacher A's identities were interpreted in the accompanying commentary by considering the nature of the narrative, tracking of the metaphors, how descriptors were used to provide a connecting thread and how the images and narratives were interconnected.

Headteacher A felt that a core value that was central to her construction of professional identities was responsibility, "*because what you do impacts on others".* This value was certainly the initial motive for going into the profession, to make a difference and to have an effect on young people with a deep joy for learning; experiences she relished as a Deputy Head. In all that she does, she says she has a

consideration for the community, others and the students within her school; and she appeared to have a high level of emotional engagement in her role and through her identities as a Headteacher.

Her previous role as a Deputy Head was the only significant life history which she felt had had any impact on her current identities, for she describes the Deputy role as being *"a good learning curve, to practice the emotions and pressures of being a Head and also, at times, to try out being a certain type of Head".* As a Deputy, her motive continued to be responsibility, to serve others and look outwards at the wider school community. Even when recounting this stage of her career, she portrayed the same high levels of empathy and emotional attitudes, portraying that emotion is key in the telling of this style of leadership. Therefore, it was no surprise that her one critical incident was an unsuccessful headship interview which had a stalling effect on her desire to pursue the role. The reason for this impact was primarily the process of application, as it involves huge responsibility and commitment alongside a total emotional immersion in the process. Hence, *"investing so much of yourself and not being successful is something you do not forget easily"*. Although she did not directly describe how she overcame this event in her career, she did continue to express the importance of continuing responsibility and sense of duty to others. The life histories and critical incidences, whilst they existed, did not really feature as major influential factors on her current identities as a Headteacher.

It became very apparent that Headteacher A spoke of multiple identities yet had assigned them to discrete layers. At the heart of these layers, she described her core identity which she believed was untouchable by the outside world, the discourse of

her school environment and of the influences of other people. She felt that this core was acquired at birth and determined who she was as a person by deciding which of the other outer layers to expose and use for a particular situation. This capacity to use agency through decision-making was influencing and reinforcing the overwhelming sense of responsibility she felt towards others and *"the school".* She felt empowered to make decisions and chose which aspects of her identities would be suited for a particular situation. This level of agency gave her the understanding that the inner self was a stable, fixed constant that was determining what type of person she showed to the outside world. Headteacher A describes agency as a method of choosing and revealing her stable, predictable and even core identity, whilst agency has no impact on how these individual identities manifest themselves. However, it does determine which identities at a particular time are determining her.

Headteacher A's narrative suggests that identities are hermetically compartmentalized into core, personal, public and professional identities. Each of these identities is closely interrelated, exerting influence on one another and continuously shaping the Headteachers' identities. Thus, any event that impacts one of the Headteacher's identities is very likely to have an influence on the other identities. The reasoning by Headteacher A indicates that, whilst she articulated a concept, her underlying understanding is that of a continuous and dynamic process. The aspects of agency, a choice, a decision, a manifestation and a reaction to experiences and other people that Headteacher A was describing in her role alludes to the appearance of a constant process of construction and reconstruction by using aspects of her core, professional, public and personal identities and, hence, they are holistic and not compartmentalized.

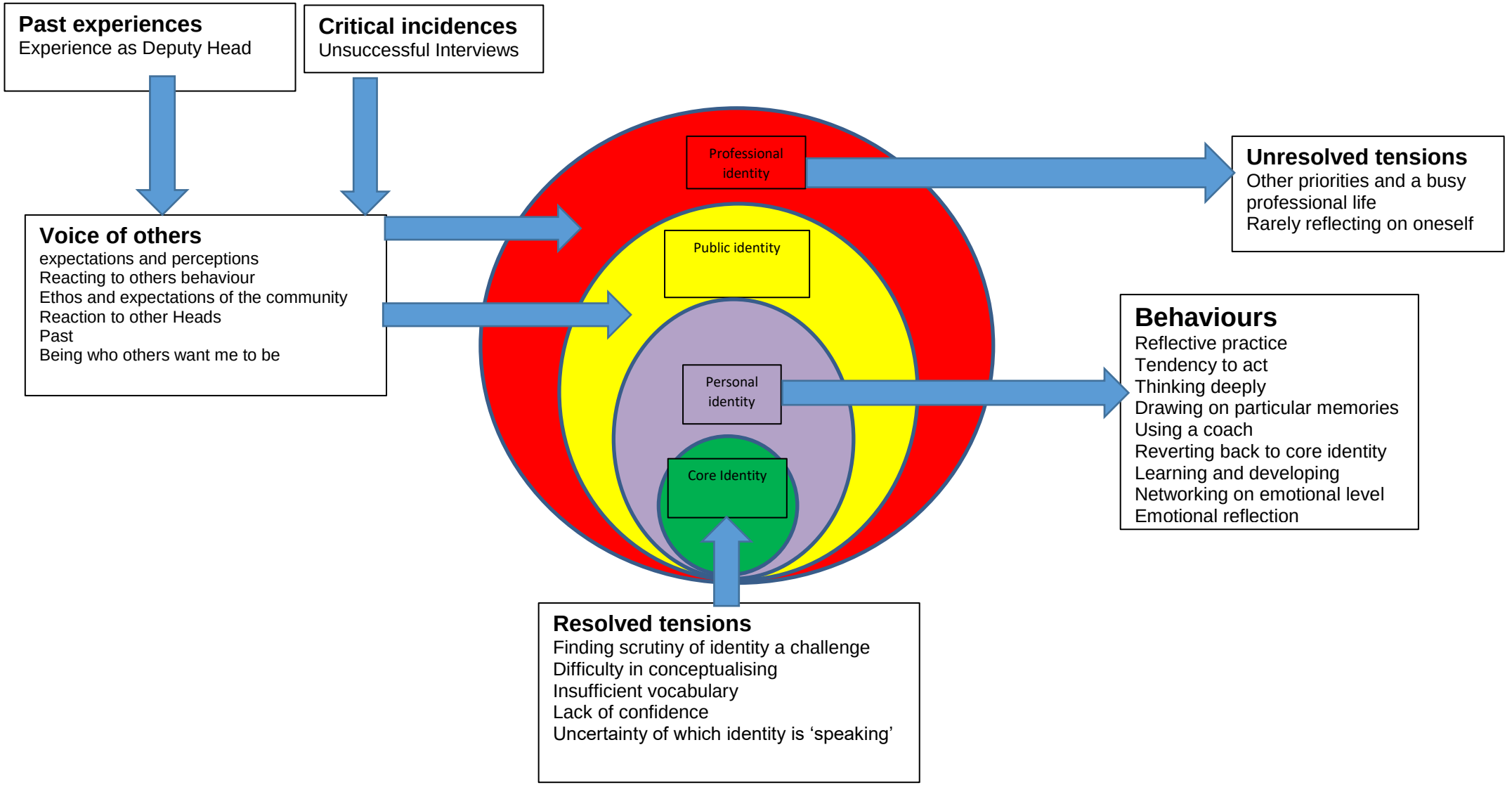
By interpreting identity construction as a process of utilising multiple layers, which fundamentally is determined by a stable core identity, she felt that, as a Headteacher, she learned to conform and almost develop a consistent identity for certain situations. Her belief is that her outer identities are predominantly socioculturally determined by the ethos of the school, and the expectations of others, as being the greatest influencers on her choice of layering. She sees this as a positive aspect, particularly in her role of leading the school community, and expressed emotions of confidence and reassurance in the assumed identity of a Headteacher in her own school. The influence of her context, and of others, was quite prevalent in her public and professional identities, and once again related to her sense of responsibility towards the school, individuals within the community and of being part of the collective community of Headteachers of all-girls' selective independent schools. This came through very strongly when she described the significance of the houses and the tree.

The role of the core identity goes further than just revealing differing layers of her identities. She also considers that, despite it being hidden and not seen by others, it nevertheless exerts an influence over and determines significant aspects of her world. She feels that her identities, and who she portrays in her role, determine the culture and ethos of the school. Whilst she was not entirely sure how, or through what mechanism, this occurred, she was nevertheless convinced that who, and how, the Headmistress is portrayed greatly influences the school. She even goes as far as saying that aspects of the school and of her role as Headteacher are so intertwined that there is oneness of identity. This claim links well with Headteacher A's resolved tensions which were based on the fact that she accepts that there are limitations on

her conceptualization, and articulation, of her identities which she assumes stems from her core identity; the driver of who she is.

Further suggestion that the construction of identities is an ongoing process was captured by several unresolved tensions that predominantly inhibited her professional identity and, likewise, those constructive behaviours which she situated at the personal layer. Headteacher A was unsure of this precise location of influence, but felt that it was best placed at the inner layers, as the pathway of influence seemed to flow outwards, rather than inwards. However, despite this uncertainty, these behaviours allowed her identities to evolve and reconstruction to occur. Despite Headteacher A's apparent lack of confidence, and insecurities about her level and ability of articulation of her identities, her narrative conversation was a very cohesive and structured event which was strongly held together by the single image and all the components in the image. I needed to ensure that the identity plot showed interrelatedness and cohesiveness.

Figure Six: layers of oneness – identities plot for Headteacher A



Representing Headteacher B

Coding of the revised narrative transcript

Because of geographical distance, it was difficult to organise a convenient opportunity to conduct the face-to-face narrative conversation with Headteacher B. When we managed to achieve this, a limit on the available time and trying to fit the narrative conversation into a very busy schedule had an effect on the type of data gathered. For instance, the setting was quite formal in that it was conducted over an office desk and, as a result, introduced a certain genre to the conversation. Additionally, Headteacher B seemed distracted due to her tight schedule and therefore did not appear to have the same opportunity as other Headteachers in being able to expand and elaborate on her narrative. Headteacher B was very aware of this imposed constraint and, from the very outset, raised it as a concern. We agreed that, in order to give her narrative justice, additional explanations, interpretations and confirmations would be added, once I had transcribed it. As part of the methodology processes, all the transcripts were passed to the participants for verification and amendment. All the Headteachers changed and added comments to a varying degree; however, Headteacher B added significantly to her original transcript.

Although the thematic analysis (Table Seven) was extracted from her narrative, I still had a lack of clarity with the interpretation and sense-making of the construction of her identities when I attempted to build the identity plot. The narrative relating to the dynamics of each theme, and the reasons for interrelatedness, were not so obvious and clear. However, despite the difficulties I encountered, I am satisfied that the resultant interpretations have been agreed. Following the narrative conversation with

Headteacher B, the notes I made in my reflective diary included:

Table Seven: summary of the themes and signs from the narrative conversation from Headteacher B.

A priori themes			**In vivo themes**	**Signs of the themes**
Communities of Practice. (Wenger, 1998)	**Subjective Sense-making Model. (Valsiner, 2007)**	**Identity Construction Model. (Märtsin, 2008)**	**From Headteachers' narratives**	
Mutual Engagement	Social experiences and interactions	Critical incidences		
		Life history and past experiences		Moving to current school Previous job Development of educational vision
Joint enterprise	Internalised through agency			
	Influenced by community	Voice of others		Traditions of school ethos Stereotypical traits of Headteacher Expectations of school community
	Rejection	Unresolved tensions		Keeping a hidden identity Aspects of the job that lose identity Feeling hemmed into the identity Barriers to forming identities Being devoid of identities Confined and stripped of identity
	Acceptance	Resolved tensions		Risk of exposing identities Masking myself
Shared Repertoire	Shared meaning and values	Personal identities		Family identities Confirming identity – to be safe Staged identities
		Public identities		Nothing mentioned
		Professional identities		Forced identity – lacks humanness and portrayal of oneself Bureaucratic identities Community identities Traditional identities
			Devoid of identity	No particular identity formed by putting barriers up
	Behaviours and routines	Behaviours		Transferring identity onto other staff Evolving and developing identities Using the family to define identities Communicating a clear vision Learning to present different identities Reflecting

"The conversation took place in the Headteacher's office; I sat opposite the Headteacher on the other side of the desk; this established a very formal setting. The Headteacher seemed to be preoccupied; I sensed that she did not retain eye contact, as is usual; she was on edge and constantly fiddled with items on her desk,

constantly looking at the clock, seemingly distant in her response. However, she insisted that she wanted to take part in my research, though I realised that there may not be an opportunity to expand upon issues, nor for conversation."

The subsequent analysis revealed more than I first anticipated and, as the interpretation began, deeper issues emerged from the chronicle and images, as highlighted in the commentary. This allowed Headteacher B to delve more deeply into meanings that were revealed in the narrative initially portrayed; and this led to an open and trusted conversation without boundaries or constraints.

As Headteacher B's analysis progressed, it began to reveal previously hidden and almost (it would seem) unconscious reasoning. I would have liked to have spent more time with Headteacher B; however, my role as a researcher was not to be the listening ear for a research participant who needed reassurance, for she did not consider her narrative to be significant. It was simply my privilege, being a narrative researcher, that Headteacher B did make accessible to me some very personal, and emotional, internal issues.

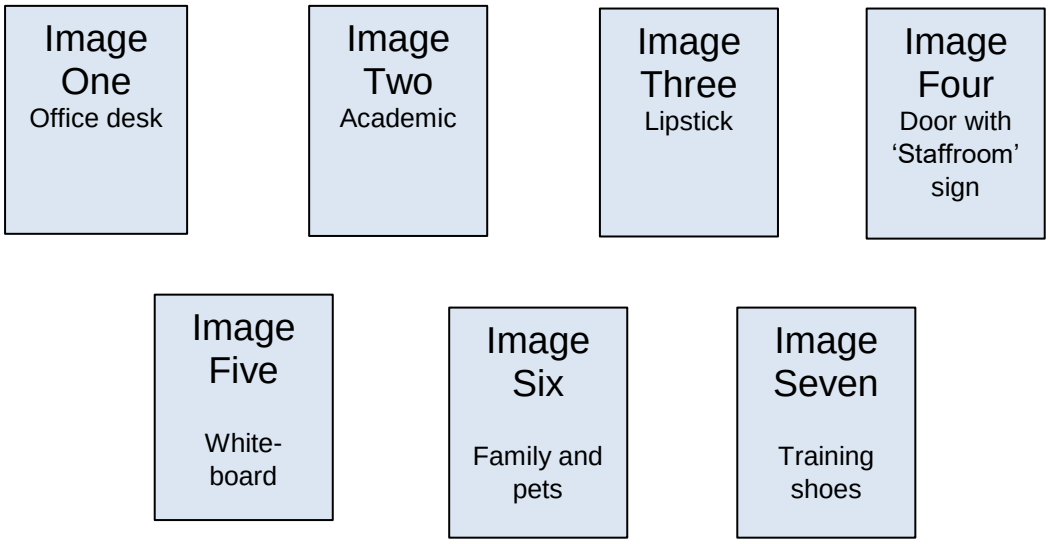
The atmosphere of the conversation was very formal and, whilst we were under tight time constraints, Headteacher B took a very structured, business-like and ordered approach. She began by placing the images, which are represented in Figure Eight, into a defined sequence and grouping, taking care to place the images in order. When asked to explain this, she said:

"I like to have everything in order, so I hope it is alright that I have ordered the

pictures.

It will also help me to think through what I am going to tell you about them. I have started with myself and my emotions surrounding me as a person and also the needs, both physically and emotionally, for me to carry out this role; then I look at the school and then back to me again".

Figure Seven: representations of the images taken by Headteacher B



From the outset, Headteacher B was very direct in her approach and seemed to use carefully chosen language, almost as though she had rehearsed her narrative. As a result, she came across as being very definite about what she was going to say and reveal, or not reveal, during our conversation. Moreover, she maintained the conversation focus on the school rather than herself:

"I am not sure what definition of identity you are looking for, but I do not really want to discuss myself, but more the school and the expectations of the role and school and how they define me".

The most telling feature of her narrative, that became apparent from the outset, was

her high level of conformity by wanting to display the *"right and appropriate"* identity of herself and for the school. Moreover, she wanted affirmation from me as Headteacher and researcher that her conformity was normal/acceptable. An example of this would be her description of wearing the academic gown:

"I am sure you do the same in that you develop a professional persona which, in many ways, lacks humanness and restricts the portrayal of myself. It is almost the same as acting in that underneath I am a fun, exuberant, risky but quite a shy person; but outwardly, in my gown, I have to be leading, sociable, have presence and stature, almost be conforming and safe – all the attributes that people expect from a Headmistress".

This conformity was driven by the need to portray to others what they were expecting from a Headteacher. It manifested itself through a hyperawareness of her positioning, which she referred to throughout her narrative, as part of a family, the school and within independent education nationally. Her agency for defining herself and her identity seemed to be constrained by her own perception and that of others, *"including parents and, to a lesser extent, staff and girls"* of what a Headteacher should *"be"* like.

The combination in which Headteacher B ordered and grouped her images in some ways determined the structure of how her narrative evolved. She began the conversation by stating that she was unsure of the *"definition of identity that we are working towards … the open-endedness must mean that the definition of identity is to be determined by me".* Following this, the first grouping of images consisted of

images One, Two and Three.

The aspects of her identities that were revealed by the first grouping were based around the theme of wanting to portray the correct (in social/professional terms) and appropriate identity, which I have called 'conformity' because she is almost fitting her identity to the school and the expectations of others, as well as *"hiding"* and *"protecting herself"* in certain situations. All the images were significant in continuing this theme of conformity. For example; she says that her desk is a place within the school where she feels restricted in her identity because of the tasks and roles she has to carry out in this location:

"discrete, defined tasks that take over your time and, during these times, I feel completely devoid of myself and my identity. At these times. it is just about tick boxes and confirming to regulations and statutory requirements."

She went on to explain that, whilst these tasks are vital for the smooth running of the school, she felt that they were independent of her and her identity because there was no creativity or originality – it could be anyone doing these tasks. Due to the nature of the undertakings performed at this desk, she had not decorated it with personal memorabilia or artefacts, which reinforced her notion that it is a *"zone of work that is devoid of personal input"*. As a result, she describes the desk as a barrier *"between the real world and this zone devoid of identity"* as it hems her into *"a world of paperwork, problems, emails and a telephone"* and a barrier that prevents her from engaging with pupils and staff.

A further example of her conformity would be her academic gown, which is used primarily for public and formal occasions. By wearing it, she is able to portray a professional persona that members of the school community expect. Furthermore, she associates these occasions with acting, *"because underneath I am colourful, fun, exuberant and risky".* The gown acts as a disguise by *"masking"* her as a person whilst allowing her to display attributes that people expect from a Headteacher – it allows her *"to be Headmistressy".*

Following on from the concept of *"masking"*, both her personal identity and her as a person, she portrayed the wearing of lipstick and the academic gown as ways of displaying both her personal and professional identities for occasions such as conferences. These are times when she needed to be professional but could also display aspects of her own personality, with the feeling that she could take a risk and expose more of her. She went on to explain that the lipstick also *"gives her confidence and the ability to cope with difficult situations".* In particular, she needed this almost extrovert confidence to deal with new situations when she is out of her comfort zone, as these are times when her identity as an individual might be exposed and judged. Interestingly, she adopted this look of wearing a very dark formal suit and bright red lipstick for her narrative conversation.

Headteacher B then selected the next set of images which included Image Four, the staffroom door, and Image Five, the whiteboard. This second grouping of images avoided further discussions about her as a person and instead focussed on the identity of the school, from which manifested the actions, passions and motivations of the staff. *"I am the hand on the tiller and the staff are working hard to keep the*

ship in the right direction". It would seem that, through the use of this metaphor, Headteacher B hoped that some of her professional identity would transfer onto the members of staff. Likewise, the whiteboard image signifies her ethos of being a *"lifelong learner".* Her fervent wish was that, under her leadership, staff and pupils would gain not only a desire for academic excellence and inclusiveness, but also an appreciation of the joys of lifelong learning. Moreover, the whiteboard symbolises that she has to constantly learn and adapt as part of her role. Thus, *"my identity is evolving to deal with new encounters in my role".* She admitted that her professional identity was much more dominant and could, on occasions, overshadow her as a person.

As the final grouping, Images Six and Seven were considered. However, Headteacher B did not elaborate greatly on them. She explained that, whilst they do not directly contribute to her official role as a Headteacher, they were external factors that have developed who she is as a person: *"they are outside of my role, which does allow me to stand back and take stock of what I want to do and who I want to be in my role".*

Despite there being sufficient time, Headteacher B, having established that she had a personal identity, did not initiate or develop further explanations about it; it was as though entering into the realms of personal identity would go against conformity. The running shoes signified that there were aspects of her personality that did not involve her identity as a Headteacher or her family identity as a wife and mother. She found in running an activity where she did not have to be a particular person, nor did she have to achieve anything in particular. This seemed to be a strategy for both bodily

and mental escapism from the expectations of others.

“I think as hard-working Heads, and with many of us residing amongst our role, these photographs represent the obvious important parts of my life that, whilst they do not directly contribute to my official role, my family and pets and home life, are vital in establishing who I am. They keep me on the ground and remind me of that, but that is really all I need to say”.

The identities plot and commentary

Headteacher B’s narrative did not initially become clear. However, as she continued to explain and clarify aspects of her narrative, she admitted that she wanted to find freedom from fear, failure and over-exposure of herself to others. She explained that, underneath, she is full of life and vitality; yet, in her various roles, she had a guarded approach to how much of herself she showed, and to whom. She seemed to have a turbulent dilemma between order and freedom, isolation and sociability and, finally, conformity and individuality. This dilemma manifested itself as contradictions and struggles in her identities, in particular when she spoke of development and learning, as her reasoning was at odds with conformity:

“I am mindful of the time, but the whiteboard reflects the fact that I like to be considered the leading learner, as many aspects of the role are about learning, developing, evolving, as it is impossible to be prepared for the whole variety of issues and situations that the role entails”.

First, her office desk was a space she saw as being vital for her role and yet

"depicted the ultimate loss of identity". The reasons she gave for this loss were that the desk was primarily used to perform administration tasks and paperwork that did not allow her to be creative, individual or original. Sitting at her desk made her *"confined and completely stripped of herself"*, and yet, she chose this as the location for the narrative conversation about her construction of identities, which raised many questions. Was she avoiding revealing her full range of identities? Is her professional identity being forced or driven by the pressures of the expectations of who and what a Headteacher should be? At times, her level of uncertainty and a lack of confidence in her appreciation and articulation of her identities suggested that she was being 'forced' into a role identity she was neither comfortable with nor fluent in. but had been created in order to meet her perceived views of how a Headteacher should be conducting herself.

Secondly, a common thread woven through her narrative was that of fragmentation. She described three discrete aspects of her identities: professional, personal and a part of herself which was almost devoid of identity. In conversing about each of her identities, the other two were not linked in any way. For example, in discussing her professional roles and their identities, she made it clear that, through her images and subsequent narrative, she had several strategies for *"masking and hiding"* the personal identities which she thought reflected who she really was. Likewise, she compartmentalized her identities when she was not in her role as a Headteacher.

The risk of exposing identity and the masking of herself are very strong indicators of the uncertainty, or unwillingness, to allow her personal identities to be exposed, and thus intertwined, with her professional identities. So, she felt a strong need to keep

them separate and to portray them as disconnected identities. However, this separation presented itself as resolved tensions, as she seemed content and accepting of this portrayal of herself. It is an interesting point that the resolved tensions are attributed to her personal identities, and yet the turbulent and unresolved events focus solely on her professional identities. The unresolved tensions portray a degree of conflict and uncertainty with her professional identities. I am particularly intrigued by her feeling of being *"confined and hemmed-in to an identity"* as this is further suggestion, and reinforcement, of the concept of a 'forced' identity; one that restricts her level of agency and capacity to determine the form of her identities. In conjunction with the apparent lack of agency in forming her identities, she suggested that there are barriers to constructing the identities that she wishes. In her narrative conversation, the overriding reason for this barrier was that, despite a reasonable time in her role as Headteacher, she lacked the confidence and assertiveness to communicate who she is as leader of the school. This could also indicate that she is driven by being who she is expected to be; and that is possibly her view of leadership, in that there is an expectation of her not becoming personally involved in her professional roles.

Overall, Headteacher B was approaching her role as a Headteacher with rigidity and an almost total lack of humanness as, to quote *"the giving of myself"* was causing her to feel vulnerable. This disclosure of potential and possibly unspoken fears surprised me, as my perception of a person in the position of a Headteacher is that they are confident and secure in their role and, in particular, with their identities. Despite this, her vulnerability still shone through in her narrative.

The analysis of her unresolved tensions highlighted further the issue of vulnerability and insecurity in her role and of herself. This became evident when she described aspects of her life that were devoid or stripped of any identity. I initially interpreted this stance as Headteacher B's way of saying that there are aspects of her experiences and world that are not influenced or impacting upon her personal and professional identities. The image, and the associated explanations, of the trainers implied that this is an activity in which she does not have to perform or incorporate a forced or particular identity. Hence, during this time, she was in fact describing her stable, pre-determined core identity. Further questioning of Headteacher B confirmed that, actually, what she was trying to say was that there is an inherent fear in her regarding who she is and what she stands for, not being competent enough for her role as a high-performing Headteacher of an all-girls' selective independent school; she lacked confidence in her ability. *"I feel that I am not good enough – you must think I am so under-confident that it is a wonder I can be who I want to be".* The occasions of being devoid and without identities are times when she does not have to perform or meet the expectations of others. At this point, my first interpretation and use of the label 'forced identities' could have been changed to 'performance identities', as there are numerous references to her need to perform and portray a certain set of identities. Her professional identities are imposed, but also performed, in terms of her feeling that she does not generate them.

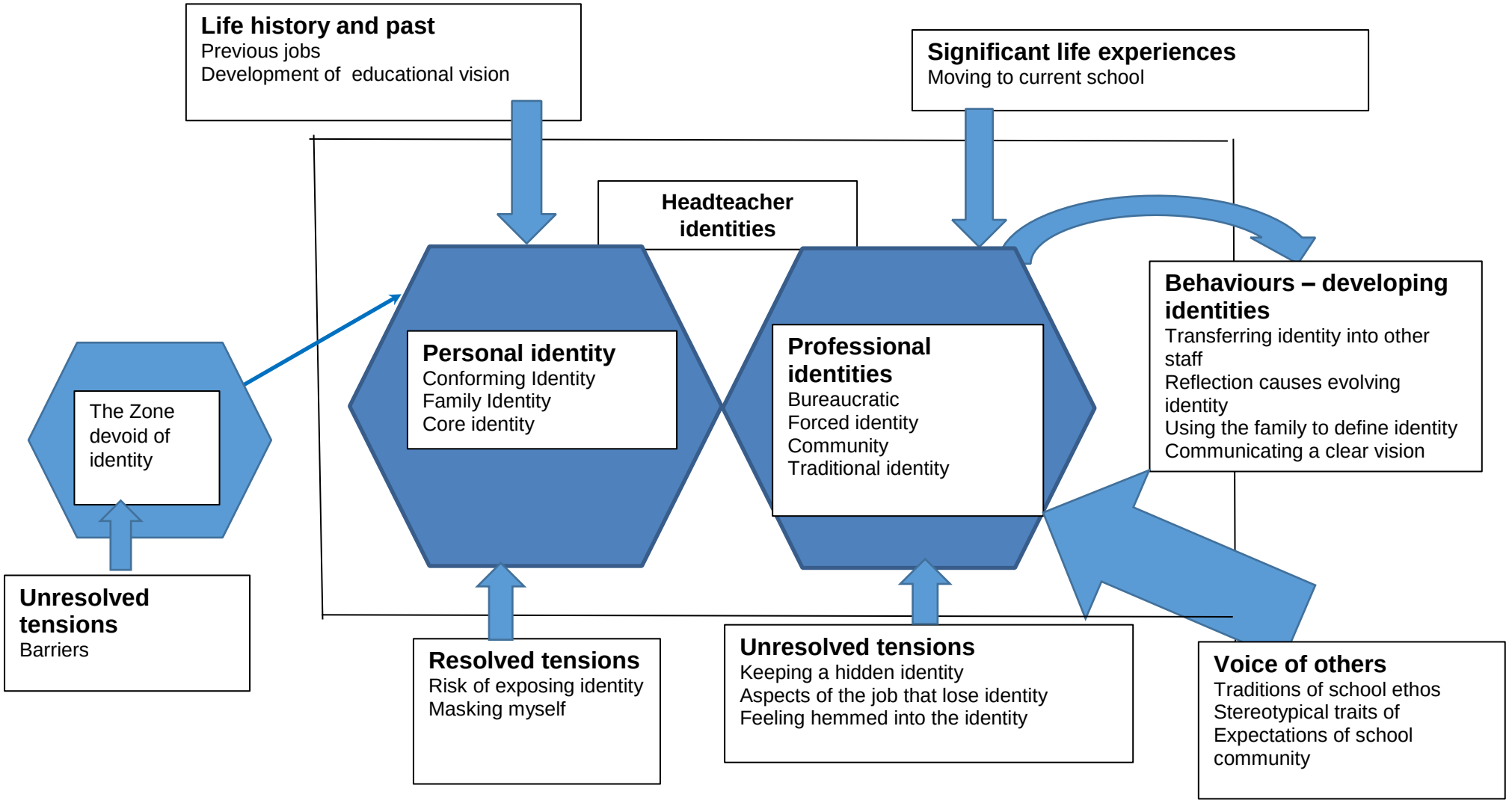
Whilst performance identities may be a better description and fit to her narrative, both performance and forced identities imply a limited use of agency. Due to her need to exist in a safe and predictable environment in order to show her personal identities, it suggests that the context is dominating Headteacher B's level of agency.

It became apparent that she is actually in conflict with agency as, on the one hand, there is a desire to be in a safe, predictable and ordered environment in order to portray perfection and control; and yet, throughout her narrative, and context, the voice of 'others' is very dominant in her construction of identities.

I was also intrigued that, despite being asked, Headteacher B was unable to or did not want to offer any historical or significant life event that may have formed her current identities. Whilst her past may have influenced her current identities, keeping in line with other interpretations, Headteacher B either lacked the confidence to reflect backwards in order to inform the future or she felt that no events had a current impact on her professional identities. In terms of her identities, Headteacher B narrated contradictory aspects of herself and oppositional views of her professional and personal identities. On several occasions during her narrative, there was an apparent struggle for the dominance of a particular identity, specifically as she was explaining the image of the academic gown; almost as though her professional and academic role identities were something that she could hide behind. I feel that her uncertainty about (non)-belonging to the community of professional Headteachers was overcome by the use of protective strategies.

On reflection, Headteacher B's narrative was an emotional account, as indicated by the expressions of vulnerability and almost unworthiness of being a Headteacher in such a responsible position. I was also taken aback by her openness to expressing uncertainty and a lack of confidence in her ability in the role of Headteacher. In hindsight, having initially come across as being very formal, I felt a deep level of trust in that she felt she was able to share this with me.

Figure Eight: duality of identities – identities plot for Headteacher B



Representation of Headteacher C

Coding of the revised narrative transcript

Table Eight: summary of the themes and signs from the narrative conversation of Headteacher C.

A priori themes			**In vivo themes**	**Signs of the themes**
Communities of Practice. (Wenger, 1998)	**Subjective Sense-making Model. (Valsiner, 2007)**	**Identity Construction Model. (Märtsin, 2008)**	**From Headteachers' narratives**	
Mutual Engagement	Social experiences and interactions	Critical incidences		Realisation of the 'gender effect'
		Life history and past experiences		Upper-class background Educational success Experiences as Deputy Head Memories of being a hockey player Educational background Lifelong friends
Joint enterprise	Internalised through agency			
	Influenced by community	Voice of others		Educational values and morals Leadership books Influence of power
	Rejection	Unresolved tensions		Marrying of personal and professional identities Protection of insecurities Making a choice of identities
	Acceptance	Resolved tensions		Voicing her power and authority Dissemination of power Use of agency
Shared Repertoire	Shared meaning and values	Personal identities		Being female Her moral compass Knowing a core stable identity Friends
		Public identities	Collective identities	Dissemination of power and values Determining vision Conformity Team identities United approach and co-existence with school
		Professional identities		Confident of one's success Power and dissemination of power Hero identity Moral and emotional foundations Close connection with school and role as headship
	Behaviours and routines	Behaviours		Professional development and reading Distribution of identity Picking and choosing which identities to use Confidence and self-esteem

The narrative conversation began with an air of hesitation and uncertainty as Headteacher C raised concerns over the use of images, shown in Figure Nine.

Figure Nine: images for Headteacher C

Image One	Image Two	Image Three	Image Four	Image Five
School set up for assembly	Bookshelf of leadership books and journals	Window with blinds which half closed/open	Members of SLT holding hands	Hockey stick and all

"I found the use of images quite intrusive, as a questionnaire is keeping us within our comfort zone and is less exposed to being misinterpreted; so part of my delay in sending them was maybe because I was unsure about the photos and what you would find in them. Also, they can be interpreted by different people in different ways and, hence they have the potential to be misread".

Understandably, most Headteachers are not accustomed to portraying themselves through images. Indeed, it is not a common way of communicating our daily lives. Therefore, what followed was a conversation of reassurance about the ownership of the images, the need for privacy, as well as the problems associated with maintaining privacy and how they would be represented in the thesis. The conversation began with a discussion as to how accurately the images portrayed her identity as a Headteacher. She felt that some of the images could stand alone and needed no explanation, but that others did not sufficiently depict the *"emotional passion"* that she felt for her role. However, she concluded that a number were illustrations of some of the aspects of her identity that she would not have otherwise been able to verbalize, thus introducing an interesting revelation.

I know this Headteacher very well, therefore I was very conscious, as already discussed in the methodology chapter, not to over-influence my expectations or

interpretations of her by anticipating what and how she would explain the images. We have previously had detailed discussions regarding our educational philosophy and how we lead our schools. Subsequently, I had to refrain from over-analysing the images prior to the narrative research conversation occurring. Interestingly, the images differed from those of the other participating Headteachers in that they were centred on her school, the pupils, staff and learning; initially there appeared to be no personal aspects depicted in the photographs. However, she implied that her images would be used as prompts for her to describe her approach and identity, but that the content of the images may not accurately depict her story; hence the use of images in a metaphorical manner.

Unlike the very informal and unstructured start of the conversation, the ordering of the photographs was achieved in a very assertive and definite manner as shown in Figure Ten:

"this is not because I am very confident with the images, but I would like to think that I know, extremely well, the school and myself and also how the partnership between the two co-exist to form my identity".

There seemed to be a clear understanding of a balance which she felt existed between agency and external influences that are shaping her identity. It therefore made sense to present Headteacher C's narrative in the order of her choice of images. However, the issue of justifying herself as an educational leader continued:
"I have not seen my career as a battle or a campaign. What drove me to the top was a sense of the matter at hand, the enjoyment of the job, the sense of achievement

that comes from addressing challenges and changes – I like to be in the thick of things and I would not make a good number two!"

Very noticeably, when the conversation turned away from the images, Headteacher C's confidence grew, and she displayed a high level of self-confidence and certainty. This seemed to stem from an ingrained belief in her ability and judgement which was underpinned by a well-defined educational vision and forward journey for herself and her school. During this initial part of the conversation, she raised the issue of gender in the context of some of the national strategic educational responsibilities she holds:

"I am never conscious of being a woman unless other than if someone draws my attention to it. I believe you should operate from the strength of what you have to offer and not on the strength of being a woman. I am effective by being me and all that encompasses, which includes being a woman."

She seemed intent on setting herself apart from feminist approaches to leadership and aligns more with masculine managerial cultures. She continued to explain that, for her, education was central to her success and in defining who she was. She recalled her enjoyment of being tested at school and discovering that she could excel, uncovering early on her power and its building of self-belief. Oxbridge, in particular, had propelled her and had *"moulded the social world she had grown up in and had broken the typical female stereotypes"*. Education and achievement seemed to be central to her as shown by her further comments:

"Definitely, I have always thought that there is an element of you that is constant and does not change throughout your lifetime; and for me, I did not get that from my

parents and upbringing but from my education. Certainly, there are aspects of your morals, values and characteristics that remain a part of you throughout your life. I don't know whether that is what is meant by identity or whether it should be given another term, but it is something that I believe contributes greatly to the formation of me as a person, and that person is a Headteacher."

Whilst she gave no historically significant events or incidences, her comments nevertheless suggested that she felt that there was a core identity having overall influence on who she is as a Headteacher. She then returned to Image One, the school hall set up for an assembly, describing the events of an assembly as a gathering of all the school's leaders and also that it is a way of reinforcing her position of power, responsibility and authority. Whilst distributed leadership is one of her strong beliefs, the role of an assembly was a medium through which her identity as 'hero' status and that of power was reinforced:

"I think this is the most significant school event, when I can exert those features of my identity as a Headteacher. I am very comfortable to be the leader and also for the school community to see me in this position, it just seems natural."

"There are two ways of looking at what I mean by the word 'power', and both of them apply to my identity. Firstly, there is the position of power; and although I am a believer and practise distributed leadership, and like to disseminate power throughout the school, I nevertheless like to have control, I like to exert power and also give the perception of who is in charge and has the overall power. The second aspect of power is that a community event such as an assembly is a very powerful

occasion, as I can give my message, they can hear my voice and I can verbalize my morals and values. A huge part of being a Headteacher is about leading the moral, ethical and values of the school and an assembly is a powerful forum to share these with the community."

She expanded on the role of the all-school assembly by stating that it was an avenue through which the organisation would develop and share a collective identity; throughout, she was very comfortable with authority and leadership and saw herself as key to the school ethos and identity. This was a vital ingredient of the school community, as it enabled the members of the school to understand her identity and also individuals to find their own identity within the collective school vision. Having access to her voice in assemblies, the school members were able to share more of themselves with each other:

"We expose our true selves by being open and honest, and yet we share the emotions of others. I feel that, as the Headteacher, my position is very significant in that I am the ultimate role model and often staff, pupils, parents and governors look to me as the moral leader, and they react to situations depending on how I determine the reaction to be; and I suppose I base this on my identity."

Her view is that her identity determines the vision, ethos and identity of the school and that she holds ultimate power and status to do so and is seemingly very self-assured and confident with the impact she has. Likewise, members of the community expect her to have this status and role.

Whilst Headteacher C narrated her story in a very positive manner, with endless enthusiasm and passion, she also realised a dilemma and difficulty in marrying her personal identity and the collective identity of the school. She expressed an element of conformity and revealed aspects of her identity that she considers the school community expects of her:

"In some situations, deep down, I want to say or react in one way that suits me as a person; but, actually, I feel the burden of responsibility and expectation and end up reacting in a way that fits the role and not me as a person".

This suggests that Headteacher C may compromise her identity in order to deal with a particular situation or event. The dilemma of who she feels she is may partially be moulded by the books that she has read and subsequently used at certain times throughout her career. She does not portray her identity as one that has evolved or changed over time, but almost one that she has acquired before gaining the position of headship, in so much as a part of her identity is being able to establish which aspects of her she needs to, and should, reveal in order to deal with a situation. As she describes her notion of agency and its role in determining her identities, she referred to Image Two of the educational journals and leadership books that, along with the school community, have shaped her identity.

The reading of books on educational leadership has allowed her to reflect upon her practice and inform her identity. However, in her narrative she implies that the process of reflection is considering the outcomes of a particular task and is not focussed on reviewing how her identities have manifested themselves. Modelling

and mirroring seemed to be common methods that she deployed in defining her identity. This stance again reinforces her view that her public and professional identity is fixed and already

formed; agency is allocated to how identity is then used:

"My personal identity is one that I am very confident about and it only influences myself, whereas the public identity carries great weight and affects all that I do within my role … I tend to use modelling a lot; what I mean by that is, I try and mirror actions and things I have seen, read about and heard from other Heads I have worked for or seen in action."

The image of members of her senior leadership team holding hands in a circle defines her *"team identity"*, which was also reinforced by the image of the hockey stick and ball. Whilst I initially thought this concept of team identity may be the same as her public professional identity, she made the distinction that her team identity involves more empathy and emotional attachment; the words 'sameness', 'connectedness' and 'resonance' were used to make the deeper and cohesive relationship with certain individuals within the school community. The hands joined in unity signify the fact that, as a team, they are the *"doers, the hands on"* individuals who are connected to her and, through her power, have acquired the same school vision and, indeed, the same identity. Despite the hands showing individual differences, indicating that people can be individuals within her school, under a united approach, she felt the joined-up thinking and positioning mask individuality.

The final aspect of her identity of Headteacher C was revealed by the image of her

office window and the semi-closed blinds. Her narrative continues by mentioning and reinforcing the influence that power has over her identity and how her identity manifests itself in her role. She also confirms the concept of an acquired identity that is repeatedly practised and honed within the confines of her office. However, despite her consistent talk of power and control in forming her identity, she has identified times when she needs to protect her insecurities to prevent her personal identity influencing her professional self:

"*The first thing is that this view, and the window, perhaps addresses the interface of my personal and professional identity; I see my office as a kind of haven where I can exercise me being me and, in a way, it is within these walls that I have the power and control over decisions."*

Despite confidence, and a strong sense of identity in her role, Headteacher C expressed the need for a source of confidence and of a safe haven. This is to be found where it can grow, in her office, and it is this space where she can reinforce her headship. Moreover, it is a private haven where she can trial, act out and recalibrate her levels of power and control over her school and herself; an opportunity for her to have a backstage away from the eyes of public performance:

"Sometimes, when I have a very challenging task, or I feel slightly tired or under the weather, I will close the blinds so that I am cocooned in here, because the outside world and its challenges are shut out. It's not that I need protection or security, but I need to do this sometimes so that I can really have full power and control over myself,"

The identities plot and commentary

Unlike some of the previous participants, her narrative began by outlining some historical scenarios that have influenced her present day Headteacher identities. There were recounts of experiences as a Deputy Head and her educational background, memories of being a collegiate, the team ethos as a hockey player and of lifelong friends who have all given her a sense of worth and have moulded her values and educational vision. My interpretation is that, throughout her upbringing and education, she has been driven by personal emotional and moral values:

"I have always thought that there is an element of you that is constant and does not change throughout your lifetime. Certainly, there are aspects of your morals, values and characteristics that remain a part of you throughout your life. I don't know whether that is what is meant by 'identity' or whether it should be given another term, but it is something that I believe contributes greatly to the formation of me as a person, and that person is a Headteacher."

These have defined the core and stable identity she describes when her three main facets of identity – namely: professional, collective and personal identities – come together. Her narrative was told very much through her values, which span a significant career.

At the point where Headteacher C engaged in her narrative with me, I was very aware of a woman who has a clear, independent view of what she wishes for at this stage in her career. Her conscious move away from orthodoxy and external expectations, including gender conformity, to an internal valuing process, which

identifies the need for more personal satisfaction and affirmation, is evident in her narrative.

Power and control were very strong themes that were threaded throughout her entire narrative, where she portrayed a positive, successful and confident approach, appearing, apparently, to be secure in her role as a Headteacher and in her other life roles. This viewpoint was influential on all three facets of the construction of her identities, namely: her professional, community and personal identities.

In terms of her professional identity, Headteacher C entered the research process with a conscious, externally-presented narrative of identity based on demonstrable competency and achievement, derived from her successful career progression and development. On numerous occasions, she cited her expertise, her leading profile within the school and how its power and control were being distributed throughout other members of the school leadership team. On the surface, she portrayed her headship identity as one of a *"hero"*, where she was in control and keeping a firm hand on the tiller:

"Once the leaders of the school have symbolically gathered the school community together, they are all focussing on me who leads and delivers most of the assemblies."

The predominant aim of this approach was to determine tightly-controlled academic values of the school and to create boundaries for personal development to occur within. Headteacher C also voiced the various strategies and avenues that she used

to reinforce her position of power and leadership.

With regard to her identity as a Headteacher, she described herself as having a driving philosophy that has inclusion at its core; and she stressed the importance of encouraging and listening to the child's voice. Her capacity to speak out and be assertive was a part of her professional identity that she said often got her labelled as being atypical for a female by, once again, breaking the stereotypes. She concluded that she has become aware of connections between early experiences, along with the passion that fuels the role of Headteacher and its sense of moral purpose.

As her narrative progressed, she gradually began to reveal, under this ordered and controlled exterior, an inherently subjective persona. This was not initially evident, but was more emotionally layered and raised questions for me about the relationship between her personal and professional narratives and the role of destiny. Her personal identity had been primarily formed from her effort to achieve educational success, but she has been greatly influenced by an upper-middle-class background and orientation, which has allowed her access to discourses, knowledge, cultural practices and experiences conducive to independent schools. Hence, she portrayed great affinity and a sure understanding of her role within this context. Thus, she felt that her confidence came from class privilege, success and aligning and fitting into the school context.

Many of the characteristics and aspects of her professional, and personal, identities

are used to engender a sense of community and a connection between her and the school. She highlighted several strategies and channels through which she shares and encourages the school and the community to take on aspects of her Headteacher identity. It became apparent that her community identity was an aspect of her overall identity that she was prepared to share and, almost, give away in order to progress and develop colleagues and the school.

When talking about tensions, there were generalized issues such as the use of agency and the struggles she had choosing a particular aspect of her identity to use in certain situations. Whether they were resolved or unresolved tensions, she viewed these in a very pragmatic manner and saw them as a natural process of having, using and developing one's identities. The main unresolved tension was the interface of her professional and personal identities for, although she preferred to keep them separate and discrete, she realised that, at times, they had to be used in conjunction with each other, which led to her feeling less confident and uncertain of her position:

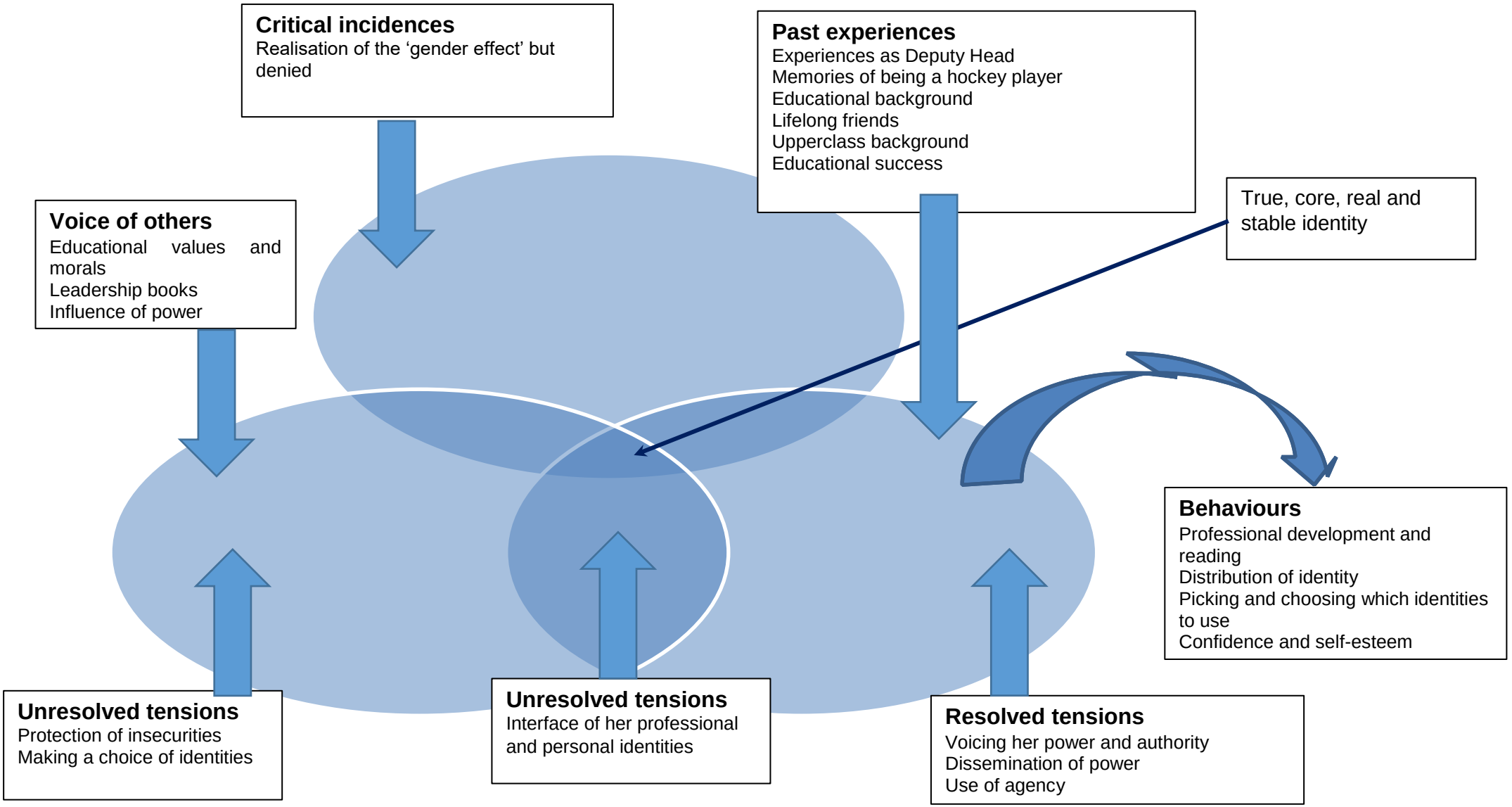
"Since reading a book about emotional leadership, I have been practising new ways of dealing with issues; so not only am I in control of what happens in here, but also, I can decide how I wish to deal with people and issues, and what aspects of my personal and professional identity I wish to use."

She felt confident that influencing all her identities was a stable and real core identity that represented a true self. Whilst she did not elaborate greatly on this core identity, she related that it was a resultant and covert aspect of herself that existed below the

visible and external threshold, and yet it influenced and moulded much of the moral identities.

There were three defined yet interlinking aspects to her identity, and whilst she described the notion of agency, she seemed very assertive and clear in how these three aspects complemented and worked alongside one another. She discussed a potential core and stable identity; however, in the main, her identities were influenced by historical and contextual influences. Unlike other participants, her confidence and robustness implied that she was also aware of how her identities also have an impact on the school and her colleagues.

Figure Ten: identities plot for Headteacher C



Representation of Headteacher D

Coding of the revised narrative transcript

Table Nine: summary of the themes and signs from the narrative conversation of Headteacher D.

A priori themes			**In vivo themes**	**Signs of the themes**
Communities of Practice. **(Wenger, 1998)**	**Subjective Sense-making Model.** **(Valsiner, 2007)**	**Identity Construction Model. (Märtsin, 2008)**	**From Headteachers' narratives**	
Mutual Engagement	Social experiences and interactions	Critical incidences		Grammar school education Lack of kudos First teaching role
		Life history and past experiences		Early career in the state sector The need to grow in status through training
Joint enterprise	Internalised through agency			
	Influenced by community	Voice of others		Lack of the correct social identity Too old to be a Headteacher Mentor – the great believer Membership to the club of Headteachers
	Rejection	Unresolved tensions		Unstable identities Lack of confidence Not fitting the mould
	Acceptance	Resolved tensions		Constraining me into a particular type of identity Not coming from the right background
Shared Repertoire	Shared meaning and values	Personal identities	Core identities	Determines how identity is transient Stable Confidence-giving A dichotomy with the role Gives care and attention to situational identity
		Public identities	Situational identities	Transient and unstable identities Every situation is unique, different identity Organic and evolving Connectedness and sharing of identity Sociocultural influence
		Professional identities		Nothing mentioned
	Behaviours and routines	Behaviours		Allowing identities to evolve Professional development Gaining of additional professional tools Developing the identity Picking/choosing which identities to use

The previous narratives have each been presented as 'messy texts' – being a combination of verbatim words, interpretations by the Headteacher or myself as the researcher. The 'pick-and-mix style' that Headteacher D adopted during her narrative conversation made it extremely difficult to follow a particular thread or to make

interpretations likewise; it was also very difficult to keep up with the dynamic nature of her approach.

The ‘messiness’ of her narrative was particularly evident when she discussed an aspect of her professional development and where the choice of images became interchangeable. Whilst a narrative, and hence her interpretations of her identities, may be transient and only a snapshot in time, Headteacher D was particularly unstructured in her approach and I was concerned that a number of changes throughout her narrative may have caused a loss of coherence. Figure Ten, below, represents the images that were taken by Headteacher D. There was a definite horticultural theme to her narrative which will be further highlighted as the story unfolds.

Figure Eleven: representation of images taken and used by Headteacher D

Image One Examples of seeds	Image Two Gardening tools	Image Three Tubs of colourful flowers	Image Four Greenhouse filled with bags of compost	Image Five Garden gnome
Image Six School playing fields	Image Seven A water fountain	Image Eight An oak tree	Image Nine Children sitting on sports fields	

At the time of Headteacher D’s conversations, she was relatively new to headship. As a result, her narrative is one of transformation from being a disbeliever in her ability to that of becoming a positive, inspirational and successful Headteacher. I felt it was important not to portray the narrative in too simplistic a manner, akin to a

‘before and after’ story, as this would run the risk of dismissing her previous and historical identities. She often mentioned her previous experiences in a dismissive way as highlighted in the extract: “*you do not want to know what I was like”.*

However, I did find her narrative and her style of narration difficult to capture as, in line with the concept of transformation, she portrayed identity not as a noun – stable and relatively fixed – but as a verb – constantly changing, reconstructing and evolving. Her narrative developed as one about the complex, unclear and always unfinished process of identity construction. As a result of this approach, her text was ‘messier’ than the other Headteachers. At the start of the conversation, Headteacher D was asked if the photographs were in any particular order and/or if she had organised them as such? She quickly thumbed through them, discarded six of them and, in response to these images, said:

“useless!”;

“what was I thinking?!”;

“these do not show me!”

The content of the images that were discarded was of three rooms from within her school, although they seemed to be of generic classrooms and not specific or specialist areas. Two further discarded images depicted aspects of her home life. The final discarded image showed her dog.

“*I don’t think you will be interested in these. I am unsure of why I chose to include them!”*

I then prompted her to use the remaining images to explain her identities. She

scattered the photographs on the table and explained:

"I have no particular order to what I have to say or the way that I will use the pictures. I think I'll use what could be called a 'pick and mix', like the sweet shops; so I am sure I will use them all, but I'll pick up only the ones that are relevant to the point I am making. I haven't really planned what I am going to say, but I suppose I have thought about it a great deal. I have just had my appraisal and found it really insightful into who I am and what identity I am portraying as a Headteacher – I suppose I should say 'identities', because I certainly have more than one."

We then had a brief discussion about the merits of using images within a research conversation. She felt that not only did it add an additional dimension to her narrative, but also that it prompted randomness, and thus a lack of structure, to her thinking because the visual images were the most prominent and dominant stimuli in the conversation. This part of the discussion ended with her conclusion that she wanted to portray her identities as a flexible and changing entity that was not fixed:

"for example, if today I describe to you my identity as a mother, I may pick up these (she collected together Images Two, Five and Eight) to illustrate peculiarities of this identity. However, tomorrow, because my mood, my perceptions and interpretations of the world will be different, and the situation will have altered, I may not use the same images to describe the same situation."

She went onto justify this statement by proposing that:

"I think my identities are transient and unstable – not in the sense that I don't know

who I am or that I am unpredictable; but it is more about every situation as being unique, and I don't think I could exactly replicate the same feelings, the same emotional circumstances and the same manifestations of my identities in different situations. So, I perceive my identity to be forever changing, moulding to the circumstances at a particular point in time. I see identity as organic and something that evolves over time and, if it is OK for your research, an understanding that what I say today may not be the same tomorrow if you ask me the same questions. I hope that I have made sense!"

From this point forward, the narrative conversation took on the form of a joint problem-solving exercise where not only did she state her perception of her identity, but also that she wished me to formulate my opinions and question her. The narrative conversation started with the theme of challenging assumptions. It became very apparent that much of *"her journey towards headship"* involved overcoming assumptions about herself, and others, in that she was not a *"typical candidate for a school like mine".* She picked out Images One, Two, Three, Four and Five, and separated them from the remainder. As she spoke, she pointed or gestured to them, mainly when she wanted to emphasize a point or to reinforce what she was saying, the images being used primarily in a metaphorical way. However, occasionally she was so intent, enthusiastic and passionate about explaining an aspect of her identity that she did not refer to the images at all and indeed had to be asked, on several occasions, to link her explanations to an image. With apparent reluctance, this was done with comments such as:

"The images, at times, constrain and almost pigeonhole me into a certain type of identity; surely the images are secondary to my verbal descriptions and, more

importantly, they cannot show the various nuances and finer detail of who I am."

The constraints and negativity that Headteacher D had felt, and experienced, throughout her career were primarily those of being not good enough, or having the right credentials, to be a Headteacher of an independent girls' selective school:

"point number one: I am not independently educated myself and, secondly, I began my career in the state sector … so that is it; I am not going to have the kudos or the ability to do the job properly."

She recounted trying to take up headship on three different occasions, each time without success or what she saw as *"making headway"*. By this, I assumed she just saw these occasions as outright failure, rather than reflecting upon them and viewing them as gaining experience and perhaps making steps nearer to becoming a Headteacher. Undoubtedly, there was something about the role and position that was appealing to her, pointing to Image Four, saying, *"I realised that I had to develop and grow in status, in my skill set and also in my perceptions and approach".* The greenhouse image was used to depict her decision to improve her professional training, to take responsibility for her progress, to upskill her professional knowledge and to prepare herself for *"launching herself onto the Headteacher scene".*

She found herself drawn to a very determined and *"almost obsessive*" mission to give herself a broad and varied experience, at which point she referred to the image of the garden tools, to *"arm myself with as many professional and personal tools as possible"*. However, she went through a period of her life when she became quite

angry and resentful as she continued to be disappointed with her efforts, reinforcing her extant beliefs about her abilities that she was not capable, or worthy, of the role:

"I actually have a lot to give";
"but no-one recognised that in me, not even myself";
"even now, my identity is based on foundations of insecurity, disbelief, and I can easily have doubts about myself and ability".

She continued to express insecurity in her identity, which she suggested was influenced not only by her low self-confidence, but also judgements made by other people, including her friends, colleagues and other Headteachers. She felt that, at times, she needed to act out the identity of a Headteacher as she felt confident and on top of things; whilst, at other times, she needed to nurture and support aspects of her character in order to allow them to grow and develop, thus she could achieve the identity of a Headteacher, as illustrated in this quote:

"My identity is transient, like the tub of flowers. At times, I am riding high, feeling confident in my identity; and at other times, the blossom dies and needs the care and attention akin to gardening to allow new blossoms to begin to grow again."

During these periods, she felt discouraged and would yield to negative and judgemental feedback, believing herself unable to continue. Each time this happened, the perceptions of her (lack of) ability were confirmed. She would resign herself to the conviction that, simply, she did not have the capability to be a Headteacher or to become a leader:

“I just couldn’t work out how to do it properly. And because I couldn’t do it properly, I thought, well, I can’t do it. I didn’t think it was something you could learn,”

Headteacher D felt that her experiences confirmed her belief that you were either born with a natural aptitude for leadership or you were not – and she, to her regret, fell into the latter category. However, from somewhere, she found a hidden drive and determination which mainly stemmed from the positive and rewarding effect she has had on students and young people, and to overcome and challenge these perceptions of disbelief.

She felt that the obstacles to sustaining a high level of self-confidence in her ability were not only her perception of her ability, but also her family background, educational experience, her class and her age:

“My social identity is all wrong for this role”;
“And the other thing was the age aspect. You know, I’m too old to take up headship. And that’s honestly what I thought: I’m too old to be doing this. I’ll look a right idiot”.

The conclusion that Headteacher D came to in her narrative was that, because she was constantly trying to justify her position as a Headteacher, her identities were not natural, nor authentic, nor a reflection of herself. Rather, they were constructed, and built up, from the knowledge and experiences that she had deliberately orchestrated by choosing to attend courses and certain avenues through professional development. However, she also felt that her identity had evolved in that, as her experience and knowledge have grown, she feels that she has more *“tools”* from

which to choose. She referred to Image One and commented that she loves topiary and feels that it epitomises a final, perfected form in the same way she is now able to combine identities to create what she perceives as being the final form.

Underlying the narrative of Headteacher D was a journey of transformation from someone who believed that she could learn, and acquire, the skills and identities to be a Headteacher to now believing that it is actually about her core identities as a person:

"I was still convinced that, you know, it's your academic ability and knowledge. But I must admit, as time goes on, I am thinking more and more now that a lot of it is about who I am; that you just need to learn to push yourself to have confidence and belief in yourself."

The gnome (Image Five), for her, represented positive thinking, fun, continual learning and the fact that part of having certain identities is about displaying and developing them to be an individual – each gnome being an individual in its own right:

"*I now think professional knowledge is essential, but the ability to use your identity is even more important, so I have swapped the garden tools for the gnome. And I think, as I'm learning a new way of using my identities, I've been able to gradually understand, adapt and choose which aspects of my identity I can pick and choose to use."*

She further used the gnome image, adding that she was gaining confidence and able

to be an individual who is quite happy to become more conspicuous and willing to stand out, as a gnome in the garden does. After many years, she now does not want to be camouflaged by other people, but wishes to be an individual within a defined set of identities.

The final part of Headteacher D's narrative is based on the shared aspects of her identities, choosing Images Six, Eight and Nine to explain her reasoning. She started by using Image Eight – the oak tree, and areas of the school that are outdoors. She paid particular attention to the oak tree, as she felt that it symbolized her belief that she is guided by some form of external, and greater, force that she is not completely in control of; nevertheless, it gave her a holistic and altruistic reason for her existence:

"And it's still standing after all this time, it must have endured a lot and been through a lot. So for me, it symbolizes a shared story and the connectedness that my identity has with different bits of my life; it is the school which connects me to all the members of community and is the glue for all aspects of my role. I also like to think that my connected story gives me the feeling that I exist in a larger story, larger than myself".

Her narrative continued with the use of Image Nine – students sitting on the school field. She introduced this image by explaining that she thought she was selfish and, rather than concentrating on others and leading them, she was more concerned and focussed on developing her identities:

“I mean, let’s face it, I’m a Headteacher now. I could perhaps still play around with what type of Headteacher, if I wanted to. But at this point in time, it’s not something I can improve on, get any better at, or do anything much with now”.

She felt that she was at a turning point now, whereas previously she had been only looking at herself:

“I’ve now got something else I can do that is giving me as much pride, if you like; and with as much sense of achievement as forming my identity gave me. My aim now is to share my identity by making it reflect in school ethos and culture, by encouraging staff to mirror my identity and to ensure the school has a partnership with my identity.”

When asked to elaborate on the use of the word ‘partnership’, Headteacher D explained that she felt that her identity was being shared with the school; and, likewise, the historical culture of the school was influencing her identity, and that truly shared identities were developing. She hoped that her identities would evolve with the school.

The identities plot and commentary

Despite all the trappings of professional success, Headteacher D describes her professional journey as *“success against the odds*”. What emerged from the narrative conversation was a story where achievement in education was seen as an escape route from a difficult, and what she considered as an unorthodox, start in life; one where teaching was an aspiration based on what she was good at and strongly

believed in. Despite being a *"late starter"*, she had a strong upward professional rise, culminating in her current role, which would be considered by many to be a high-status position. However, she appreciated that life events were important with regard to the development of her as a person and Headteacher.

There was an air of negativity at times when Headteacher D recounted her life events, and yet, whilst she recognised that they could have had detrimental effects, she had attempted to turn them into opportunities, for they acted as a way of reflecting upon "*what type of Headteacher she wanted to become".* I had a very strong personal connection to some themes in Headteacher D's narrative, yet in my role as the researcher, it was important that I allowed her narrative to be her voice and not my interpretations. Headteacher D was very clear in her belief in a core self which determined who she is – she *"would have fallen apart"* if it had not been for the realisation of this stable, core self. It also determined which aspects of the context and situation she was *"allowing into her core self".* She believes that the main function of her core is to carry out the same 'pick and mix' approach, as she demonstrated in her narrative conversation, to aspects of her world that may influence her identities and indeed what she, herself, might influence. She called this *"inner compartmentalisation"*, as she knew that some aspects of her world remained concealed and hidden until her inner core chose to use them, or give them recognition, in order that they became significant. An example was given when she actively wanted to portray a self-image that was an attractive, competent and responsive professional, and yet the impact of many earlier, fearful and shaming episodes – for example, managing poor behaviour of students – would remain consciously hidden.

During her narrative conversation, there is evidence of a dynamic relationship between personal and professional identity; the line between her descriptions of *"identity performances"* was being constantly negotiated. Conversations focussing on professional identity far outweighed those involving personal identity. Personal identity issues were largely subservient to professional issues and it tended to be me, as the researcher, who reminded her of the focus of core identities.

Headteacher D thought that she had handled her core identity with pride and felt that she managed her choice of identities all the time with *"boundless optimism".* However, she had recently experienced a trauma in her school, involving the death of a colleague, which had been deeply upsetting because she had considered that her colleague had put a lot of work into the school. Along with low self-esteem, she recalled that her mentor had told her *"she could do the job, but not alone"*. She felt let down by her inherited senior management team, but was able to *"hide her emotions",* and then she *"got on with motivating herself"*. This was another example of how positivity had pervaded through a very difficult and negative time in her career.

Despite her present-day success, her previous challenges were historical aspects of her narrative that continued to influence her use, and range, of professional identities. Headteacher D felt that she was destined to be a teacher, and subsequently to progress to the role of Headteacher; and despite setbacks, and often disappointment, with her efforts, she has been determined to achieve her aims and vision. Yet there still remained a sense of under-confidence, confusion and

disappointment in her efforts which had reinforced her existing beliefs regarding her inadequate capabilities and affinities.

The transformation that Headteacher D referred to was the manner in which she had developed and honed her identities as a Headteacher through professional development courses. Having now realised this transformation in herself, she has realigned her attention to attend the social, collective settings and contexts in which she can act out and share her identities. Headteacher D is proud of, and has embraced, this acknowledgement as the first steps to emotional growth and understanding, as this will lead her to be an influence elsewhere.

With this in mind, Headteacher D showed that there were different degrees to which she managed her emotions and identities – for example, from switching a part of herself off for certain parts of the day to protecting or managing aspects of her identities as she saw fit in order to deal with situations during any particular moment in time. She was unable to explain how she achieved this, but acknowledged that, at times, that she did not use or employ certain aspects of her personality. Her narrative also explained that, whilst the management of her identities may happen, it may not always be expressed or evident; she applied this aspect not only to personal but also professional organisational control. Alongside this, there were a number of identity contradictions which were exposed – in particular, the often-discussed symbiotic relationship between emotional vulnerability and survival determination characterized by Headteacher D's career success and present-day, secure, middle-class lifestyle.

The dynamism and changeability of her construction of identities had to be depicted in the identities plot (see Figure Twelve). I decided to model the plot on amoeba – microscopic algae which are constantly in motion as they move, digesting and excreting (throwing away) aspects of their world as and when they need to. Likewise, Headteacher D's construction of identities involves a 'pick and mix' of situational identities which are 'digested' and then displayed before being discarded (excreted) to suit the event or situation and what identities she would like to have. An amoeba has a nucleus – this is represented by Headteacher D's core identity – which is perceived as the controller and the centre of agency for her construction. Whilst she was very certain of the dynamic aspect of her construction, the unresolved tensions were interesting because instability of identities, and the subsequent lack of confidence, still remain. Thus, whilst there is a change in the actual identities that are on display, the process of achieving these is unlikely to change, as highlighted in her behaviours. As a result, she remains over-anxious and unable to integrate with the community of Headteachers.

Whilst in her narrative, Headteacher D suggested that the school was the main source of determining which situational identities are digested at a particular time, there were also the voices of others alternatively adding the issue of age, as well as reinforcing the lack of the correct social identity and adhering to the mould of the club of Headteachers.

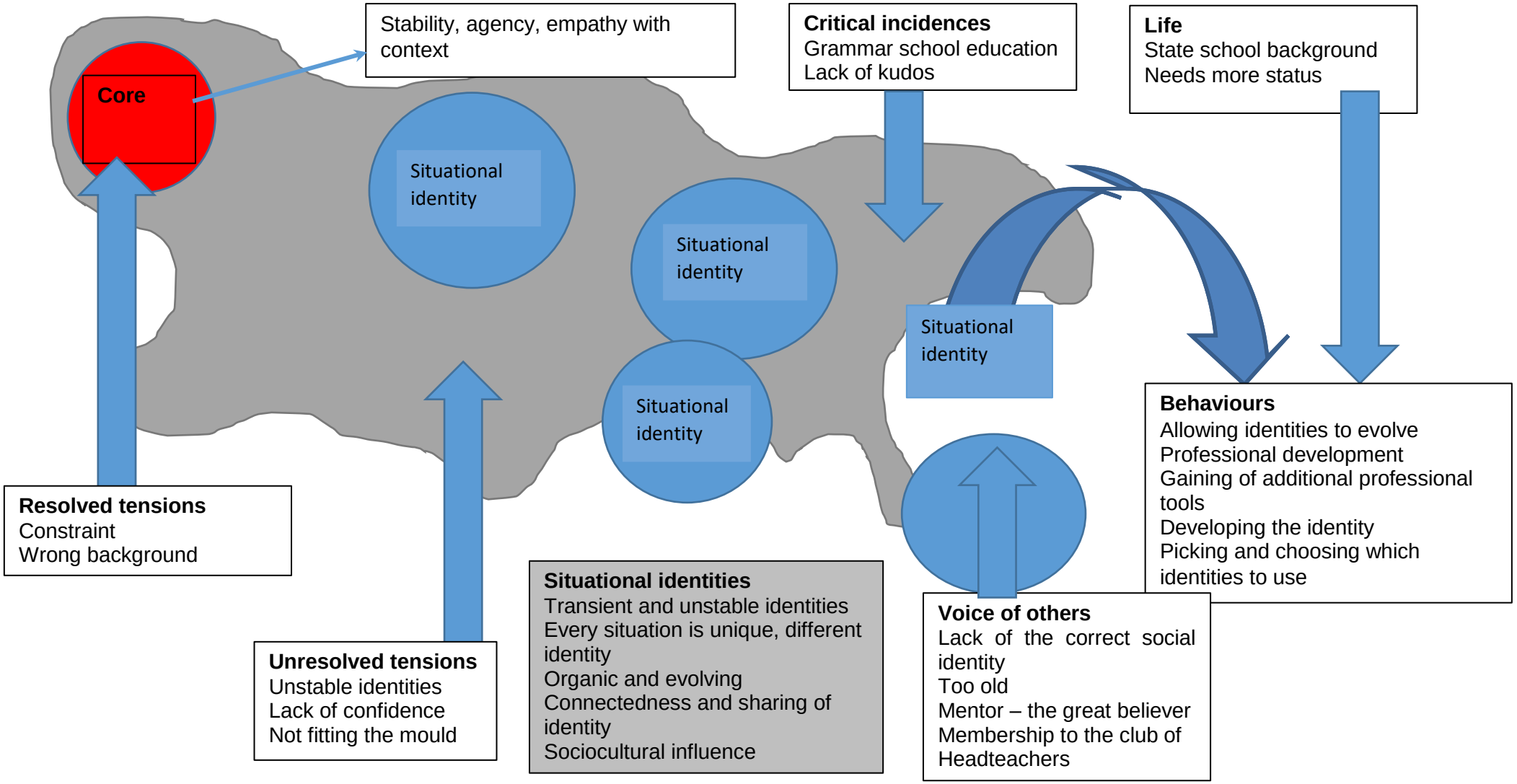
Conclusion

As described and explained in the methodology chapter, three different phases of analysis took place and were presented sequentially in this chapter with the hope

that the reader has now become familiar with each Headteacher. Before moving on to a more detailed discussion, I wish to briefly reflect upon the analysis of the four Headteachers' narratives in conjunction with my research questions.

With a view towards my first question, the interpretations of the Headteachers' narratives presented a process-orientated perspective of identity construction, incorporating and mediating multiple identities through agency. Each story is unique, but there were notable features that emerged, common to several or all of the participants, as well as individual features specific to particular Headteachers. In terms of the second research question, each narrative revealed dynamic relationships with personal sociocultural influences and experiences to construct each Headteacher's identity. This analysis highlighted the performance of the narratives in relation to the interviewer, themselves and to others within their narratives, as well as detailing how the constructions of their identities are constrained. These subjects will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Figure Twelve: the ecological amoebic identity – identities plot for Headteacher D



CHAPTER SIX

Discussions and reflections

This study set out to explore the professional socialisation of Headteachers within the context of all-girls' selective independent schools, with a view to gaining some understanding of how they construct their professional identities. I chose a narrative inquiry approach (see Chapter Three) to the research since I understand the value of narrative in capturing the complexity of teachers' lives and experiences. My decision is supported by Connelly & Clandinin (1999) who claimed that it is through storytelling that Headteachers will be able to construct their professional identities.

Through this narrative lens, I was able to explore the narratives of the Headteachers and, in doing so, brought together different perspectives of the construction of identities and adopted a conceptual model that explained both the process of identity construction and the nature of Headteacher identities. This identity model was greatly influenced by Wengerian theory and drew upon the framework of communities of practice. Having presented and explored the data, the findings of this study are discussed in this chapter to link with the literature review and to answer the research questions.

Research question 1

How do Headteachers of all-girls' selective independent schools construct their identities within their ongoing interaction and professional socialisation with their communities of practice?

This research question focussed upon the process of socialisation within the

Headteachers' school context and their communities of practice. It was intended to explore the process of identities construction.

The individual identities plots suggest that the construction of professional identities is very individualised and unique to each Headteacher. Flores & Day (2006) claim that each individual has a distinct sense of self, predominantly based on not only past experiences but also a range of multiple identities that we associate with. All the Headteachers indicated Headteacher identities among other social and role identities such as Deputy Head, hockey player, runner, mother or wife. It is suggested by Knowles & Crow (1991) that these identities provide the foundations for constructing further identities, including professional identities. This suggests that these past experiences and identities outside of the professional role provide, firstly, belief systems that serve as filters for new interactions, which in turn influence the current everyday sense-making; and secondly, to provide personalised motives and reasons for carrying out the role which will influence the level of interaction within the community of practice (Knowles & Crow, 1991). These differences in motivation and approach were certainly expressed clearly in the Headteachers' narratives and were evident in their reasons for performing their headship role, their approach to their leadership style and how they described their relationships with colleagues and their approach to role tasks.

The Headteachers' motivation and approach became a significant feature as they determined the level and nature of their relationships with others within their school (interestingly, none of the Headteachers mentioned relationship with the students). Engagement and proactive participation in these relationships were seen as

important to the Headteachers, as they recognised that socialisation allowed their identities to be in a continual process of reconstruction. This aligns with research carried out by Beijaard et al. (2004) and Alsup (2006) who both suggest this idea of individuals being 'in progress' and, hence, their identities being under construction. Socialisation took place that is inherent within the social structure of the school and with groups chosen by the individual. This did not seem to be significant, as it was the process of socialisation and engagement that contributed to the process of identities construction. Mead (1934) reminds us that the 'self', or one's identities, are a result of socialisation and, hence, the 'self' can only exist with a social context.

This process of socialisation was described by all the Headteachers who engaged fully in discourses within their school communities and with groups outside of school. Each Headteacher also had expressed an established network of support within their role and so their 'becoming' Headteachers have been socially negotiated. Wenger (1998) would have described this process as becoming a member of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Throughout the study, each Headteacher not only felt confident and clearly identified with their communities of practice, but also felt that they had the professional skills and attributes to "*be headmistressy*" (Headteacher C); hence, they all had a clear sense of professional status. However, at times, doubts and insecurities were expressed as "*wondering when someone will find me out*" (Headteacher B) or they expressed behaviours which suggested that their Headteacher identities were not well-established. None of the narrative conversational interview questions asked specifically about the source or reasons for these doubts. Nevertheless, I was very

intrigued by these feelings of doubt and insecurity. However, knowing the participants and having analysed their narratives, I surmised that these doubts were not caused by tensions as claimed in research by Alsup (2006) who placed great significance on the presence of tensions. Being a Headteacher myself, I was also convinced that it was not an emotional reaction to a challenging situation, as identified by Bullough (2008). A final possibility has been expressed by Wenger (1998) that these professional doubts could be attributed to individuals still participating on the periphery of a community of practice. Wenger claims that, with more proactive and intentional socialisation, the Headteachers will become more established members of the communities of practice, which would be confirmed by greater confidence in their role.

Having confidence and an understanding of oneself is essential to the construction of professional identities (Watson, 2006) and it therefore came with no surprise that all the participants entered headship with some preconceptions and fixed expectations of their role. These preconceptions were heavily influenced by informal and formal experiences in settings gained prior to promotion to headship. Experience in deputy headship and mentoring by previous Heads constituted towards sources of role conception of what it means to be a Head. Unlike research conducted by Earley (2013), who cited that formal courses are significant in constructing identities, none of the participating Headteachers gave these experiences such priority within their narratives. The participants proposed that having the opportunity to share experiences and explore dilemmas with fellow colleagues allowed them to realise that the process of professional roles is a difficult procedure in any context and not a consequence of personal incapability to perform headship. This suggests that job

shadowing and reflecting on their Headteachers' practices while in deputy headship informed aspirants' professional identities in terms of how leadership is enacted in specific contexts.

One could argue that job shadowing and experiencing roles as a deputy head caused role expectations which support DeRue & Ashford's (2010) claim that professionals are having to constantly adjust and renegotiate their identities in order to maintain the role expectations of others. DeRue & Ashford go on to say that a Headteacher needs to enable stakeholders to recognise the role of Headteacher, as their endorsement only strengthens the conceptualisations of headship. As shown in Bullough et al.'s (1991) research, receiving positive feedback, affirmation and support from the communities of practice regarding leadership practices enabled the participants to identify themselves as Headteachers and to establish their credibility with confidence that they could succeed in post. All the participating Headteachers expressed a level of having to fit into the expectations from their communities of practice as well as the wider school community. A certain level of frustration was mentioned, however, in general having to comply resulted in positive endorsement. This positivity and support encouraged the Headteachers to implement structural changes in their school as well as giving them enthusiasm in working towards school improvement. By contrast, Day et al. (2008) suggested that conformity may arise as a lack of harmony between the Headteacher's selves and the communities of practice and school culture, which was perhaps why Headteacher B described scenarios and tasks that were "*devoid of identity*".

To conclude, the findings arising from this research reinforce the conclusion reached

by Ely et al. (1991) and many other authors that headship learning and the formation of professional identities is a lifelong process which involves a complex network of socialisation within contextual communities of practice, as well as navigating the interface of external and personal expectations to establish professional identities.

The narratives – a form of discourse and social interaction – provided the data for this study. In addition, the stories were essential to the participants' evolving identities (Bruner, 2004). I believed that the participants shared their stories with enthusiasm and honesty and, in doing so, identified new insights into themselves and their role. An analysis of recurring themes within their narratives revealed some factors that influenced their headship identities. In an effort to answer the second main research question, each of these factors, discussed in the following sections, influenced their Headteacher identities.

Research question 2

What are the main factors which have influenced the construction of Headteachers' identities (within all-girls' selective independent schools)?

I believe that it is not possible, from this research, to construct a hierarchy or a definitive list of influences as the interplay between the themes are complex and unique to each Headteacher. However, from the narratives, there were some key influencers that emerged and will be discussed in turn.

Teacher knowledge and skills

According to Johnson & Golombek (2002), Headteachers' awareness of their role,

is constructed through social interactions with others, both in and out of school. Since knowledge impacts practice, and practice influences identities, then the construction of the knowledge of Headteachers is directly related to their evolving identities. Surprisingly, the participating Headteachers did not mention or give priority to formal headship programmes or courses; however, they recognised that knowledge does have a place and an influence of what type of Headteacher they aspired to be. Lave & Wenger (1991) has already established that the construction of the Headteacher identities is facilitated by becoming a member of various communities of practice within their schools. Through their membership, the Headteachers would have engaged with the educational discourses of the schools, including engaging in collaborative discussions with their communities. These discourses, along with their interactions with colleagues, provided the means for the Headteachers to improve their school-specific knowledge and construct their headship identities (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003). It became clear from the narratives that reflective thinking took place through engagement with these educational discourses and collaborative discussions. It seems that when reflective thinking moved to reflexive thinking, new knowledge was constructed, thereby leading to changes in their Headteacher identities.

Emotions

Recognising one's own emotions and taking responsibility for those emotions is a part of constructing one's Headteacher identities. Zembylas (2003) claimed that, in order to understand how professional identities are formed, one must consider the part emotions play in constituting those identities.

A range of emotions was identified in all the narratives, including empathy for colleagues, frustration when something did not go well or having to do a task, and excitement with positive initiatives. The Headteachers were sometimes explicit in naming their emotions; for example, their use of "*passionate*", "*excited*", and "*a nervous wreck*". From my perspective as the researcher, it was evident to me that each of the Headteachers were emotionally invested in their role. Evidence of this emotional investment was seen both in the compassion with which they spoke about their role and in their desire to make their socialisation meaningful.

Each Headteacher had their own ways of dealing with the emotion of stress, which included running and family life. It appears that supportive outside-of-school contacts and communities of practice and a sense of self-concept made the role less stressful; and when stressed, the candidates were prepared to acknowledge the stress and deal with it.

Geijsel & Meijers (2005) suggested that emotions are critical to identities construction because the Headteachers would respond to a situation which would have an impact on their professional identities. Whilst emotions appear to be important and a natural part of identities construction, the participating Headteachers were very reluctant to discuss emotions at length, as though they were perceived as a weakness or negative influence.

Management of multiple identities

The Headteachers fully recognised the multiplicity of their identities, which they broadly divided into the professional and personal. These identities, accessible to the

individual Headteachers at any given time, linked well with the idea of the sociocultural availability of identities outlined by Watson (2006). Through constructing the identities plots, it became very evident that each of the Headteachers were constantly managing combinations of multiple identities. It appeared that their personal identities were compatible and overlapped with their professional identities, as aspects of the Headteachers' personal experiences were also reflected in their interactions with colleagues and their leadership. For example, Headteacher C voiced that her moral compass embraced both her professional and personal identities which, for the majority of the time, is constructive but, at times, the marrying of her personal and professional identities were at odds with each other.

The management of multiple identities could be interpreted as examples of boundary encounters used in Wenger's (1998) research. The concept of boundary encounters can be applied to the Headteachers' management of their identities; Wenger explained that, when individuals move between communities of practice – in the case of the Headteachers, between personal and professional or during the process of socialisation – a reconceptualisation of identities would occur. Wenger described a variety of strategies that could be applied to the Headteachers because, according to Day et al. (2008), different identities are possibly needed in different communities of practice and this suggested that Headteachers need to negotiate these boundary encounters.

Most of the Headteachers presented a very holistic and fully integrated narrative of their identities; often bridging between communities of practice within their professional and personal lives. In doing this, the majority of the participants cited an

apparent absence of boundaries between their communities, hence resulting in identities from differing communities influencing each other. In contrast, Headteacher B demonstrated a narrow perspective, where only identities from one community were present and, as a result, her narrative was compartmentalised and has clearly defined boundaries. It was not possible to illustrate Headteacher D, as her narrative indicated a shifting model of transferring between communities; and, at some point, she demonstrated that her identities were not fixed or permanent and it would appear that she was always in transition between communities of practice.

Headteacher A acknowledged a two-way interaction between the school culture influencing the construction of her identities and her identities shaping the school culture. Moorosi (2014) reinforces this two-way process and states that the school culture is socially constructed and influenced partially by the identities of the Headteacher, in particular, how things are done within a school context. This study aligned with this claim, as Headteacher A's interaction with the school context and the communities of practice has had a profound impact on the construction of her professional identities.

Headteacher A, with her onion model for determining and differentiating her identities, claimed to exert a high level of influence on the school's culture and was highly empathetic to the process of strategic change and to making improvements (Earley, 2013). Of all the participants, Headteacher A, recognised that multiple cultures and communities of practice may be present within a school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and, hence, recognised the need to adopt and change to the dominant

culture by proactively choosing which identity or identities to reveal and employ at any particular time.

For Headteachers A, C and D, there was also a very real sense of enjoying the position of authority that came with the Headteacher role: "*At the end of the day, I like controlling what goes on*", claimed Headteacher D. Some participants were aware of being propelled into leadership positions by their school communities and, hence, they assumed a role of authority. In contrast, Headteacher B's identities were based on cultural conformity, with a real desire to ensure that she was performing to the expectations of being a Headteacher. Despite recognising that some of her identities were not naturally associated with her understanding of herself, she performed them and forced them in order to meet the needs of others (Earley, 2013). She was very aware that various groups, such as parents and governors, had the power to influence the construction of her identities and, hence, she had commented that she felt confined and limited in her choice of identities. Wenger (1998) claimed that conformity might be the result of existing on the periphery of a community of practice.

Core identities and agency

The majority of the participants (Headteachers A, C and D) described their 'core identities as akin to a traditional perspective, where a core entity is synonymous with individuals seeking to stay the same and constant over time. Examples of expressing this wish were having a "*reassuring sense of themselves*" (Headteacher D) and identities which were a "*constant presence*" (Headteacher A). This is in line with Dweck (1999) whose assertions suggested that it is vital for individuals to have core

identities so that they can know who they are. At numerous points in all of the Headteachers' narratives, there was recognition that their identities were complex, transient and an evolving process; yet Headteachers A, C and D needed to have some recognisable stability in the form of their core identities as they provided "*confidence, care and attention" (*Headteacher D) and "*provides a stable foundation upon which to build other identities*" (Headteacher A). Therefore, it seemed that, despite working in a post-modern era, Headteachers felt that they had this traditional sense of sameness and consistency in the form of core identities.

These core identities were experienced as an "*inner identity*" (Headteacher A), a "*true, real and inner self*" (Headteacher C), a personal identity, hidden from view, "*untouchable by the surrounding sociocultural context and discourses*" (Headteacher A). Olsen & Craig (2005) explained these viewpoints by suggesting that there are two main intertwined conceptualisations of identities: firstly, they are defined internally by the individual; and secondly, that they are externally defined by others. These descriptions reinforced to me that the Headteachers were eager to make a clear distinction between a self-perceived inner or core identities and externally displayed, exposed and social identities.

None of the Headteachers were able to articulate precisely and succinctly how they conceptualised their core identities. It was vaguely described by the participants as "*part of me*" (Headteacher A) or "*part of who I am*" (Headteacher C), which is in contrast to the detail and explicit interpretations used for externally displayed identities. I was intrigued with this phenomenon, as it appeared that the external identities were more easily named and interpreted by the Headteachers and the

professional, external identities almost came across as being less meaningful than the complexities of their inner identities because they were less readily articulated. It could be that the core identities held such personal relevancy that it was difficult to find the appropriate language to accurately explain the meaning.

The core identities were seen by Headteachers A and D as a source of agency, which aligns with Dweck's (1999) suggestions that negotiations and interactions do occur between the core (personal) and social identities. Dweck's research provided no specific reasoning for how multiple identities are formed, but does mention that an individual's agency contributes to the development and change of multiple identities. Headteacher A indicated that her core identities determined which external identities were being exposed or used at a certain point in time, moreover, Headteacher D pointed out that her identities were multiple, transient and that her core identities "*cared*" and "*paid attention*" to her other identities in any situation. She also claimed that, without core identities, she would be lost and/or directionless, so she felt that it was the glue that kept her other multiple identities bound together to make her who she was.

It was only Headteacher B who did not mention a core or inner identities. My interpretation of this is twofold. Firstly, the notion of core identities is very much an individual and personal entity; hence, for all the Headteachers, their personal narratives were subservient to professional ones. Throughout her conversation, Headteacher B seemed to actively avoid disclosing too much about her personal identities. Secondly, core identities could be considered a self-conscious sense of self (Dweck, 1999), and language alone may be insufficient to capture the exact nature and full description of this concept that a person believes to exist but does not

fully know (Beijaard et al., 2004). The complexity and subjectivity of the core identities may not easily be verbalised and, whilst the aim of using visual images was to give greater depth to the meaning of the Headteachers' narratives, the images perhaps only highlighted its existence rather than delving deeply to fully explain or expose what the concept is. Despite the concept of core identities originating from a traditional perspective, it seems to occur as a prominent feature in order to not only bring a sense of a person's identity, but also to determine how inner identities are displayed externally.

Conclusion

This study used the communities of practice as a framework for exploring the socialisation of Headteachers and their construction of professional identities. Whilst there is little evidence of 'community influence', there are suggestions that the people and the process of socialisation located within communities of practice do influence practice. However, the research findings indicate that the community-based influences are located within wider, external influences that come from the individual's biography and, latterly, from the experiences within their professional role.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In this final chapter, I offer methodological and theoretical reflections that have emerged as part of the research process. I also outline the implications of this work for professional development, for Headteachers and for my own practice. My contribution to knowledge is claimed and recommendations for further research in this area are made.

Reflections on the research process

For this thesis I adopted a narrative approach, the rationale for which was outlined in Chapter Three. Such an approach allowed for a complex insight into the experiences narrated by the Headteachers and the methods used will be discussed in the following sections.

Visual methods

As explained in Chapter Three and suggested by Allan (2011) and Tinkler (2013), the images created by the Headteachers were not intended to be treated as realist representations or reflections, but a way of creating knowledge on the subject of Headteacher professional identities. Criticisms and limitations of the use of visual material have been made, in particular by Silverman (2001) who questioned the issue of validity, as their interpretation will always be subjective and ambiguous. Not only can two people look at the same image and produce very different interpretations, one could potentially look at the same image and see something quite different each time. I agree with Rose (2012) who states that the creation of a photographic image is an intentional active human process which requires agency, yet the validity of an image is transient and short-lived. I accept that any one

interpretation was not more valid than another, nor was there one true interpretation. Working from a theoretical approach that questions truth and pre-existing meanings, I do not view this ambiguity as a problem, but nevertheless realise that my research cannot be replicated.

The Headteachers used their images to represent their perceptions and interpretations in a multifaceted way; images were used as simple representations, others as metaphors and some images were portals, or prompts, to initiate a conversation about a particular experience (Pole, 2004). As the researcher, images raised problems and questions, yet also provided another lens of analysis that may otherwise have been overlooked. Therefore, the use of images in this research project allowed myself and the Headteachers to communicate some intangible aspects of their identities and how they constructed them.

However, it was not just the photographs that were analysed, but also the participants' interpretation of their images. Silverman (2001) concludes that, despite researchers' efforts to raise the profile and use of visual methods, researchers are more confident with words than they are with visual data. In this project, the images only informed the main source of data which was the revised narrative transcripts. However, I would still argue that photographs have given my research study further insights into the ways in which the Headteachers have interpreted and understood their complex identities. The images may have made the process of articulating aspects of their identities easier and allowed the participants who are more visually orientated the opportunity to narrate and express their understandings in a way that suited them.

Finally, some participants felt unable to express themselves through visual images alone but were able to either simply describe the image or answer my questions generated from the images. I would suggest that this inability or unwillingness to use the images is perhaps governed by previous experiences and the way in which the participants have come to make sense of their lives, for example, during professional appraisals. Meaning, at an individual level, is often word-based. We primarily explain the way we feel and think by using words rather than images, and it is therefore not surprising that some participants had some difficulty in expressing themselves using images.

Narrative conversations and analysis

The style of narrative conversation employed in this study was similar to the supportive enabling dialogue that occurred in Mills' (2003) research between female participants, as opposed to more direct, assertive and formulaic interview styles. It was noticeable that certain topics, by virtue of the ritualised start to each conversation, were discussed before and after the research element of the conversation. These topics were relevant because they were grounded in domestic, gendered and personal narratives and were, effectively, shared experiences. One of the consequences of using a conversational rather than an interview style was that it put the participants at relative ease; more importantly, the style maintained the peer-to-peer relationship that exists in our professional and networking encounters. Therefore, power and control in terms of the researcher-researched relationship was neither evident nor significant.

By knowing the participants and working within a comparable school, my understanding of their role and context facilitated the shared construction of meaning. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that I did make some assumptions, for example, in understanding the Headteachers' relationships with colleagues and also their use of acronyms, but these were always verified and checked with them. I would like to align with Mills' (2003) definition of good qualitative research where the close interplay of the participants' narrative and the researcher's interpretative assumptions both help to reveal the complexity of individual experiences. The intention throughout this study was to equally prioritise and value both of Mills' contributing factors.

Frank (2010) warns that a holistic approach to narrative analysis risks creating a generalised view rather than recognising, as in the case of this research project, the complexity of the individual experiences of each Headteacher. I am satisfied with the use of multiple phases of analysis, because, if identities and personal sense-making are constructed, complex, multidimensional and constantly changing, then researchers should seek forms of analysis that are sensitive and respectful to possible diversity in the narratives. I would propose that multiple narrative analysis is a positive way of approaching this type of work as it allows a balance between over-generalising and becoming so embroiled in the nuances of each individual narrative (Frank, 2010).

A possible limitation which may be considered is that only four Headteachers participated in this research. The images and the narrative conversations did provide rich and detailed data, but only a snapshot of a single moment of a Headteachers'

life. From the outset, I did not intend to make any generalised claims from my findings but was more concerned with presenting the authenticity and uniqueness of each narrative (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Silverman, 2001). I hope that, in the future, educational practitioners will read this thesis and that it will encourage them to further reflect and take note of their identities to inform and strengthen their personal and professional development.

Implications of the research for professional development

Volkmann & Anderson (1998) suggest that findings from research on Headteacher knowledge and identities are of use to other practising teachers mainly through professional development activities which are currently closely associated with an improvement and accountability agenda within education. This research highlighted an under-appreciated aspect that Headteachers need opportunities to talk about what they know and do and, more importantly, who they are in their roles. This was expressed by all the Headteachers because although they found aspects of the research and data collection challenging, nevertheless, they all felt positive about being a participant, as it had improved their confidence in, and understanding of, their role. Facilitating Headteachers to talk and reflect in this way about their knowledge, experiences and their identities may enable them to assess whether their aims are being achieved and whether their approach is positive and effective. It may also help them clarify areas in themselves or of their school that they wish to change (Colley, 2014).

The findings also suggest that sharing professional understandings and feelings around confidence in one's role among colleagues was a way of developing

themselves, as it allowed professional and reflective opportunities (McLay & Brown, 2000). This implies that it is important for Headteachers, regardless of which sector, to participate in communities of practice, to share ideas and personal narratives, as this may help them to become better reflective practitioners. Membership of communities of practice, attendance at conferences and networking might therefore be an essential and worthwhile part of developing an understanding of oneself in the role. In the context of collaboration and mentoring, Bukor (2015) points out that, in this ever-changing and complex world, Headteachers must collaborate to assist each other in solving problems of practice, and as they mentor each other, this kind of local theorizing can be useful, and even necessary.

As part of this study I explored both theoretical and practice-related issues. Fullan (1992) suggests that, in terms of practice-related issues, Headteachers' positions within a school's discourse are problematic, as they constrain agency by limiting a Headteachers' vision of themselves. All the participating Headteachers felt a sense of conformity, and therefore, an important implication of Fullan's findings is that it would be beneficial if there were concerted efforts to change official school discourses in order to depict a greater variety of identities and to reflect the diversity of life experiences.

Having attended many professional development programmes myself, I have been left feeling dissatisfied as they have not addressed the needs of myself and my identity as a Headteacher. This research was an impetus to further explore the lived reality of being a Headteacher and to gain understanding from the subjective experiences of individuals in this role, as well as how to negotiate their identities to

enable them to be successful and to embrace the complexity of the role. Current professional development programmes tend to be task- and issue-based, yet this study has highlighted that networking and the process of socialisation is an important feature of gaining this understanding.

Frank's (2010) viewpoint - that the task of understanding what narratives can do, how they work with people, for people and on people, affecting what they are able to see as possible, worth doing or best avoided has the potential to be undertaken in all settings - is useful here. Exploring the narrative complexity of everyday life and identity as a Headteacher could open the way for a process of lifelong learning; in that within interpretive communities, where Headteacher narratives intersect and interact, teachers expand their imaginative capacities, recreate the stories of their professional lives and reconstruct their professional knowledge (Lárusdöttir, 2007). This research implies that identities are transient therefore this reinforces the need for such professional development activities to be more extensive than just improving the professional knowledge base.

This study has certainly contributed to the growing awareness of the complexity of Headteachers' lives and goes some way to humanising the profession, since it demonstrates that researchers and Headteacher educators realise that their personal lives have an impact on their professional identity and vice versa.

Implications of the research for the participating headteachers

I begin this section by asking Frank's (2010, p. 50) question: 'How might people's lives change if they heard their own stories which enhanced reflective awareness

and if they heard others' stories with a more generous sense of what makes these stories viable representations of the lives those storytellers live?' The term 'narrative literacy' (Gilstrap, 2005, p.57) is also relevant here; this is defined as narrators or storytellers becoming aware of both the stories they tell and how these are connected to stories that they are surrounded by.

It has been established throughout the thesis that the construction of self and identities can be achieved through narratives; Frank is suggesting that Headteachers might benefit from understanding their lives as being formed through narrative and that they are surrounded by their own narrative as well as those of others. Frank (2010) went on to conclude that the cultivation of an assortment of narratives and acknowledging the diversity of stories will enable an individual to acknowledge that their identity is only provisional. If this happens, people are then able to take an active part in reformulating both the narratives of their own lives but also their identities. So rather than the Headteachers citing that they had not given their identities much thought, their improved narrative literacy enabled them to be more aware of their 'self' as well as those of others.

Narratives can have a purpose of educating participants and expanding their frame of reference (Plesner, 2011) and hence open up lives to aspects that they are not normally, or at least not knowingly, aware of. By virtue of participating in this research project, Headteacher A expressed how much more aware of her identities she had become, and in particular, with the professional identities that seemed to be imposed upon her in certain situations and by the context of her school. Being more readily able to interpret and understand particular identities may enable

Headteachers to be more effective in understanding situations and relationships with colleagues.

Hargreaves & Goodson (1996) point out that research on identity is a valuable instrument in promoting cooperation among colleagues, and in helping Headteachers and teachers cope with institutional change, as an understanding of who they are in their role enables evolution to take place. Carson (2005) carried out research within the Canadian educational context and found that dynamics of resistance emerge when teachers' identities are threatened. In the current educational world, where challenges and changes are prolific, Carson suggests that it is necessary to articulate an alternative theory of the subject (p. 8), which takes into consideration that teachers' identities are in continuous formation and involve a negotiation of new collective and individual identities. Having gained and articulated their narratives and interpreted their identities, the participants have a deeper insight and understanding which may have an impact on their decision-making and change management in the future.

Implications of the research for my practice

When I began this study, I had a vague hope of gaining a list of factors and influencers that could be attributed to the development and construction of Headteachers' identities. As my study progressed, it became increasingly apparent that each individual Headteacher's identities were unique, formed from a range of influences throughout a person's biography. As a result, the narratives and interpretations made by fellow Headteachers have given me valuable insights and a

wealth of experiences to draw upon in order to develop my practice (Day et al., 2008).

One of the greatest challenges has been to work through the tortuous process of developing a personal ontological and epistemological approach. As a physicist, I was very eager to move away from traditional positivistic perspectives and become more confident with the subjective nature of narratives. This has led me to question a competence-based conception of teacher identities; and in my daily work of carrying out staff appraisals and performance reviews, I am now less concerned with a teacher's performance against a prescribed set of competencies, but am more inclined to view a teacher as a fellow learner in a constructivist environment where there are no certainties. The appraisal system in my school now includes a process of self-evaluation and critical reflection.

In the early days of headship, I seemed to grapple with the representations of my identities, as they always seemed to be in flux; I now understand that most of my time was spent at the boundary of the communities of being a teacher and of becoming a Headteacher. During the research process I gained my second headship. This transition to a new context, a new culture and new narrative had the potential to bring my identities to the 'edge of chaos' once more. However, through my role as researcher-practitioner, I gained a wider understanding of the context in which I was constructing my identities, and this enabled me to draw conclusions about how I could work in practice alongside others.

Although this study did not seek to examine whether undertaking seven years of

research has had an impact on the professionals around me, often discussions and debates with members of my management team were centred on the theory of education and the discourses surrounding a situation encouraging some members to embark on their own academic learning. If MacLure's (1993) assertion is correct that practitioner research is able to influence future experiences of colleagues, it could be argued that all the Headteachers in this study have been able to access this experience by becoming conscious of their ability to take action.

Contribution to knowledge

Very little research (none of which I have been able to identify) has been focussed solely on the construction of Headteacher identity within the context of independent all-girls' selective education. The fact that there is an inadequate body of research prompted my initial interest in pursuing how Headteachers construct their sense of identity. My research study uses a combination of theoretical perspectives where identity is viewed as a constructed sense of sameness, across time and space; however, this sameness is subjected to agency, the association with different identities and the question of identity in relation to others. Therefore, this research project does not seek to offer a new concept of identity but brings together existing ideas to offer a model of identity construction that reflects the participants and their context.

The present research project makes a contribution to the field of identity research by offering a comprehensive way of conceptualising identity construction. The theoretical perspective sees identity construction as part of a personal sense-making process. The proposed conceptual model brings together many different strands of

theorisation within a sociocultural perspective. Therefore, the model is theoretically grounded and the identity construction process, as well as the emergence of identity as a result of this process, is clearly and explicitly explained. The conceptual model, judging by the work conducted by Valsiner (2005) and this research study, seems to be suitable for interpreting identity construction in a variety of sociocultural contexts and in relation to different emerging themes, and hence can be seen as a useful tool to be utilised and further tested.

In this study, ways of forming a notion of self-emerge from previous experiences of personal experience and social interaction that, in turn contribute to further conceptualisations of the self. The findings of this study support the view of MacLure (1993) that teachers will justify their relationships with other people, and their actions in practice, by reflecting the context they are within. This research study was set within the under-researched context of all-girls' selective independent schools and hence, I hope, this study has explored a new context of Headteacher identity. I am often told that a school reflects the Headteacher, so it may also highlight and reveal the dynamic and subjective nature of the interplay of the Headteacher's identity and the ethos of an all-girls' independent selective school.

This research demonstrated how Headteachers have developed a sense of belonging through being a part of that community. The study also bears out the varying levels of community participation and membership (Wenger, 1998) suggesting that socialisation occurs in a range of communities of practice and with a varying level of participation. Articulating this complexity was difficult for the

Headteachers and caused a lack of clarity in integrating personal and professional experiences.

The current research study sees the voice and influence of the other as a trigger for the identity construction process as it recognises a difference between the inner and externally desired self. This idea of the destabilization of the self through the introduction of a different voice has been claimed before in identity literature, for example, Frank (2010). The current study offers a further specification of this idea in relation to identity construction, providing examples that show how the constant and ongoing attention and process can escalate into identity construction episodes which may have overwhelming consequences for one's being and self-definition. For Headteachers to remain effective in their role we need to be aware of this destabilization and build into Headteacher training strategies to cope with such episodes. Whilst the use of visual methods is growing within academic research (Silverman, 2001), this study has not only reinforced the virtues and benefits of such data but also demonstrated a novel way in which visual material can enhance narrative research.

Limitations of the study

Despite this research offering some valuable insights into the identities of headship; there were limitations which have implications for practice and areas of further research.

Firstly, the research was conducted only within selective all-girls' independent schools which may be considered a small and unique niche of current educational

provision. This may be the case. However, the strength of this research is in the richness and depth of the Headteachers' voices and therefore may reflect issues that may exist in other areas of the educational sector. My intentions were not to conduct research that would produce findings which can be generalised; however, this small-scale study should help to develop understanding of how Headteachers conceptualise their identities in relation to all-girls' selective independent schools.

Secondly, in some cases there was considerable time between taking the images and conducting the narrative conversations, primarily due to the difficulty in co-ordinating appointments. Therefore, a number of participants took some time to remind themselves of the photographs they had taken and, because of the limit of time for the narrative conversations, some Headteachers did not have time to fully reflect on what they had created and why. However, this difficulty was overcome by electronically sending the participants their images to them, prior to the appointment, thus reminding them to think and consider their narratives.

Finally, despite explaining to all of the participants the reasons for and the procedures for taking photographs, most of them felt very insecure with this way of collecting data. As a researcher, I have noticed that you cannot assume participants will fully understand and also have the same confidence in the specified methods. Whilst in most independent schools, wall displays, marketing activities and PR messages involve photographic evidence, Headteachers in their everyday life tend not to use photographic images to evidence personal information or explanations for experiences. It would be useful for researchers to consider these wider cultures and experiences when setting up their research.

Reflections on the use of three Wengarian models

In this study, Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice was central to the data analysis - working as a conceptual lens for interpretation of the findings. However, this wasn't the only theory that I drew on in this study. My research eventually ended up drawing on three different but complementary theoretical frameworks in order to explore the complex process of socialisation and the construction of Headteacher identities. Each of the three theories might be considered to be at least based upon Wengerian theory, so they would not be regarded as entirely distinct from each other and in other studies it is certainly the case that these three frameworks have been used in isolation (Wenger, 1998; Valsiner, 2007; Märtsin, 2008). My aim in this research was to bring them together in order to generate a more holistic understanding of the socialisation process as my approach argues that they build on each other to highlight different aspects of socialisation. The purpose of this section is to reflect upon the combined use of these three theories in order to consider what they allowed in terms of analysis of the data and a more holistic way of viewing the socialisation process. I begin by justifying the use of each framework and confirming how they have contributed to the analysis.

Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory has three particularly significant dimensions: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, all of which help us to focus upon the social dynamics of a community; the relationships that are formed and shared understanding and meaning that exists between members of a community. Valsiner's (2007) model builds upon these ideas, but works in such a way that it particularly highlights an interface and link between the external

community social dynamics and, what might be regarded as, the 'innermost core beliefs' of a person. Valsiner's model, then, stems from an assumption that the perceptions of the individual are as important as that of context when influencing identity construction and processes of socialisation. Indeed, this was my reason for adopting this theory in addition to Wenger's initial theorisations, in order to bring this 'individual' aspect to the foreground.

The third theory drawn on here stems from Märtsin's (2008) work. Like Valisner's model, I consider this model as providing additional features for consideration. In this case these are life history and the 'inherited' aspects an individual brings with them, which might be the cause of tension or could trigger a change in identity. Thus, in conjunction the three theories work to highlight different aspects and features of professional identities and the socialisation process. Of particular importance to me in this study, was the way in which they allowed equal importance to be given to context, to communities of practice and to the potentially personal and historical aspect of this dynamic process.

As well as illuminating different aspects of the process of socialisation, the combination of the models also allowed for flexibility in the interpretation of data, so that no fully predetermined assumptions were made about the Headteachers' identities in advance. The flexibility of this analytical process allowed me to explore complexities and potential contradictions in the data. For example, I was able to explore questions around how a Headteacher might see themselves, as well as how they see their role. This allowed me to see many of the potential overlaps in perception (i.e. how they fulfilled their view of what a Headteacher should be) but

also where these jarred or appeared contradictory. This was often when other influencing factors were explained and take into account (i.e. narratives as to why they were distinct or different as Headteachers). These different explorations eventually ended up represented in the different identities plots for each Headteacher - these visual diagrams working to highlight potential overlaps, similarities, differences and contrasts. My argument here is that I would have not been sensitised to quite so many of these distinctions and differences (or even the potential overlaps) had I just utilised one theoretical framework. By drawing solely on Wenger (1998) I may have looked at the data in such a way that the differences would have been 'smoothed out' or, at least, out of my initial line of sight.

Of course, whilst there were clearly several advantages in bringing together the models in this way, there were also some potential problems and limitations. One of the main points of contention is around the understanding of community across these different theories (are they all viewing it in exactly the same way) and the importance of culture in the various understandings of community. According to Cuddapah & Clayton (2011), for example, Wenger's concept of 'community' lacks clarity. This is despite the fact that he so clearly wished to associate communities of practice with shared meaning, mutual engagement and joint enterprise. Wenger is also thought to have objected to associating his notion of community with notions of 'culture' or 'prescriptive behaviour'. The argument put forward on this is that he instead preferred to emphasise the community's creative potential. To overcome these potential differences of opinion and understanding, in this study I have adapted these ideas in order to come to an understanding that rituals, embedded customs and shared history, are indeed an integral part of a community of practice. In this

sense, my view aligns more closely with the ideas put forward by Märtsin (2008), than those originally contended by Wenger.

Another potential point of contention exists around the role which emotions might play in this process (Fineman, 2000). Indeed, for some, Wenger's framework is considered to be largely devoid of emotions, even though it is primarily concerned with relationship building amongst members. This critique was one of the main reasons why I chose to draw upon Valsiner's model. I wanted to ensure that, to some extent, the Headteacher's emotions were considered and included, particularly as they came through strongly in the narratives which were shared as part of the research. While this allowed some discussion along these lines, I would conclude that these were still not fully foregrounded in the study. This might, to some extent, be a limitation of the methodological design adopted (i.e. emotions were not a central consideration here), but given the way in which they featured in the narratives, it is more likely owing to the fact that this wasn't a central theoretical and interpretive concern, and hence emotions were somewhat side-lined.

Another, less related, observation would be that none of the three models made it easy for the analysis to examine the level of participation enjoyed by these Headteacher's in their various communities of practice. This was something which I became more interested in as the research progressed, but still feel potentially limited in when attempting to draw full conclusions. Various assumptions could be made in this respect. For example, it could be argued that Headteacher A was much more fully participating in her surrounding communities or practice, and could be viewed as a key figure in a small number of them. It could be surmised that

Headteacher B remains at the periphery of the communities of practice within her school. Headteacher C might be seen as a full participant owing to the fact that she identified her participation in a number of distinct communities both inside and outside of school. Headteacher D, on the other hand, might be viewed as existing in the periphery of many and varied communities of practice. These are, however, assumptions which in part stem from prior knowledge and understanding of how these Headteachers interact and engage, and are not solely confined to the data generated through the narrative research. Future research might consider, then, how to combine these theoretical interests with methodological design in order to foreground them. Google

Whilst it is evident that the combination of these different theoretical frameworks can bring about fruitful insights into neglected aspects of the identity construction process, it is also clear that there is more work to be done here, and that a greater combined focus on theory and methodology might reap different and interesting interpretative rewards.

Future research

When I embarked on the EdD programme I had not anticipated the profound change it would have on me as a researcher-practitioner. More research is needed to explore the impact of practice-based doctoral programmes upon the role of Headteachers. Possibly if a larger sample of secondary Headteachers were to be studied the increased understanding and awareness of their identity construction could be assessed as a reflective part of their learning processes.

Many questions arose from various aspects of my research to understand the

Headteachers' experiences which suggested the need for further research. These questions arose from the methodological approach, the theoretical framework that underpinned my study, and the findings. Possible areas for further research could include:

- Conducting a longitudinal study to explore the sustainability of changes in professional identities as a result of experiences of professional development programmes.
- Conducting a similar study in different contexts.
- As my research only included female Headteachers, there could be further exploration of the role of gender in the outcomes of negotiated professional identities as my study prompted speculations whether the outcomes were gender related.
- Exploring precisely the extent and nature of the communities of practice that Headteachers interact with.
- Exploring whether Headteachers are in fact real change agents despite the climate of constant educational changes and policy reform.

Epilogue

> 'our own experience of research is that it is difficult and frustrating and it takes a lot of time and causes a lot of tears. But eventually, it can generate ways of looking at the world which you didn't have before and which can motivate real developments in your professional practice as well as spur you on to further research activity' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p.1)

These wise words by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) sum up the immense range of emotions and feelings that I have experienced throughout this research project. From the outset, I had abandoned the metaphor of a journey as I could not

appreciate this epilogue as my final destination; and as I arrive at this point, I am even more certain that this is not the end. Having spent years agonising over the complexities of the academic landscape, I feel like a weary and homesick traveller. The guilt and concern for the consequences of those around me, of having to meet thesis deadlines at this stage in my career, while leading a busy and successful school and being part of a family, will remain. Despite getting lost and spending a lot of time aimlessly wandering through academic terminology, I feel, if anything, more passionate and more engaged with my research and the construction of my own and other Headteacher identities.

Continuing with the gardening theme introduced in the first chapter, I feel more confident in the qualitative and narrative landscape, and hence, have a clearer sense of perspective. 'the tended garden' reflects this greater sense of coherence and

Image Five: depicting 'the tended garden' (Reflective Diary, 19th October, 2016)

understanding that I feel, not only a Headteacher, but also as a researcher:

"*The weeds have been dealt with through hard work and patience; some are still there but, overall, the garden is clear to reveal a view. The Sun is shining and so the plants can thrive. I would have liked to have achieved some formal topiary to provide*

the garden with symmetry, formality and structure. I guess I am still not there yet". (Reflective Diary, 19th October, 2016)

Above all, I have a much stronger sense of my personal and professional voices – those which are closely linked with experiences and knowledge - as I can now speak out with them and not allow them to be bullied or drowned out by the words of academia. This encourages me to feel a lot more connected to myself and with my role as a Headteacher; I am certainly out of the weeds.

So while I am aware of the deep sense of satisfaction of now existing in a more pruned and organised plot, the irony is that throughout the research, as part of my reflective diary, I created a large number of images, yet have not had the confidence to express them in the final thesis; so they remain unused. I think this is only right as the narratives and images of the four participating Headteachers should take prominence over mine. My reflective research diary and, images remain as an archive of emotions and feelings from my research narrative, and they have allowed me to understand and orientate the way around my construction of the multiple identities that form myself.

This research study has undoubtedly helped me find the space to listen and understand the whisper. I know how to access my inner compass and run in the dark. I have learned the value of my colleagues and their unique professional insights, which in turn, have deepened my own understanding of the reality of the roles we share and love. I live the reality of headship every day and I am thankful for the opportunities it offers me to reflect on the complexities of how professional

conversations have helped me sustain my school and my own enthusiasm for leading schools for over ten years.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: KEY FEATURES OF THE SCHOOLS LED BY THE PARTICIPATING HEADTEACHERS.

Common Features of the Schools led by the Participating Headteachers in this Study.

This information was provided by the participating Headteachers.

- The schools were described as independent schools as they were:
    - All members of ISC.
    - They received no income or funds from Government sources, all income was generated from fees paid by parents.
    - There was no restriction to follow the National Curriculum or Government initiatives.
    - Inspections were not OFSTED driven but conducted by ISI.
    - The Headteacher is able to make decisions independent of Local Authorities.
    - Governors and Headteacher are responsible for the budgets and performance of the schools.
    - All the schools were founded by various historical benefactors and are privately run.
- The schools are all girls' schools catering for young women in the age groups of 7 – 18 years.
- All entrance requirements included an entrance examination and claimed varying degree of selective entry.
- All the Headteachers are members of the GSA.

<u>School led by Headteacher A</u>

The school stems back to the turn of the 19th century when it was set up as an all girls' finishing school, with an initial roll of 45. However, before the 1st World War it developed as a more academic school and girls were prepared for College. Their school motto still stands today in Latin (not mentioned in the pen-portrait otherwise the school's and Headteacher's identities will be exposed) and forms part of the current day ethos.

Headteacher A's school is a well-known prestigious girls' boarding school in the South of England. It's proximity to London ensures that the school exists as one of the largest girls', aged 11 – 18, boarding schools, with a current role of 550 and about 10% overseas. The proximity to London manifests itself in the fee level being quite high, over £30,000 per annum. The school is described by their Headmistress as a community where girls flourish

academically, creatively, physically and morally, a place where risks can be taken, lessons are learnt, and challenges are welcomed. The community strives for the very best for the girls and by developing their love of learning, their academic potential and their individual talents as well as nurturing them to become happy, responsible, well balanced and resilient young women in the twenty-first century.

Despite being near London it is set within a town and boasts a rural 30 acre campus which helps to portray its warm sense of community, cheerful atmosphere and strength of relationship between the community members. Boarding is flourishing and there is a real sense of a cosy, friendly and a relaxed atmosphere where there is a multitude of activities, enrichment and opportunities. Spirituality, a key aspect of the school, does not stem from its historical origins but has been developed by a past Headmistress after the 2nd World War. Since then all the women in charge have developed and promoted this aspect of the school.

The school is not selective and therefore does not ordinarily perform at the top half of the league tables, however, the 'value-added' in public examinations is a real strength. In comparison to other neighbouring schools in the vicinity the fees are very reasonable and well below the regional average which may be one reason for the school's growing roll.

School led by Headteacher B

This is a high-profile Catholic day school in a very upper class area of London and is rooted in a religious order founded in 1674. This association was primarily to enable the female staff and girls to go on a retreat and thus escape from the burdens of their everyday life, contemplate their relationship with God, to and return to their duties and work of being enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Even today this association with the Sacred Heart is celebrated annually.

The school was founded in the 1880s by two sisters and soon became a well-established institute. It has a reputation for innovation within a challenging curriculum which inspires girls to go on to University and study for the professions at a time when there was limited space for women. At the turn of the century the school roll was 132 who were either day scholars or boarders and in 1920 inspectors deemed the school the "finest in London".

The tradition reaching back to the 17th century is coupled with a modern approach to the education of girls to provide an atmosphere where students learn best, where they grow and develop into thoughtful and responsible Christian women determined to play a significant role in the 21st century.

The school crest has been recently modernised and it does not depict anything which is overtly associated with their Christian heritage. With a day school roll of over a 1000 girls, from aged 11 until 18, only 63% are now Catholic with the remainder are from the local communities. Being in the capital means that over 60% of the school roll are from ethnic minorities, even so the Catholic ethos is very prominent. However, throughout the school day there are various traditional events which seem to be at odds the modern outlook of the educational provision. Daily prayers are said, crosses and religious images are displayed, assemblies are very traditional, gowns are worn by staff for community occasions with the community appearing to embrace this.

The school is high performing in terms of examination results and is often quoted in educational debates and news feeds as a school to give advice and recommendations to the sector. Being in London means that the fees are very high, one of the highest amongst the girls' schools.

School led by Headteacher C

As a small (school roll of 350) all girls' day and boarding school which, although high performing in terms of academic performance; because of its size and also the distance from the South East, is often over-looked as a top academic school. It consistently achieves impressive academic results which enables the girls to aim for top institutions with a high percentage achieving Oxbridge places. The school has an approach to push the boundaries as the reputation is for Science, especially Space exploration and kit cars.

The number of boarders is small in comparison with the number of day girls and they are virtually all overseas which adds an international dimension to the school community. The majority of the 350 pupils, aged 7 - 18 are from the predominantly rural catchment area and of the day pupils only 2% are from ethnic minorities – so the school has a very rural British feel.

Because of the location the fees are good value and much lower than other all girls' selective schools but it has the perception of not being too exclusive. Although there is a religious heritage to the school it has a community ethos as opposed to a religious one. The school was founded in the early Victorian era by local gentry and clergy with the aim of preparing young women for a better future and possible employment.

School led by Headteacher D

This is a large day school (school roll of 530) for girls from 3 – 18 years old which aims to

develop confidence, courage and the mental and physical capacity needed for life in the 21st Century. It is part of a network of girls' schools which puts the pupils first, promotes gender equality. As a result the girls experience a liberating education giving them the opportunity to follow their strengths and potential.

Because of the Northern location the school fees are excellent value and the provision of the education is considered as exceptional value for money. The school roll is over 500, all the girls are day pupils and the school ethos is not associated with any particular religious tradition.

Compared to other Northern schools the school outcomes, including academic results, are outstanding but compared to other girls' schools it appears in the middle of the academic ranking but has a reputation for sport and being a feeder for Russell Group Universities.

APPENDIX TWO: Ethics Form From the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee.

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/category/publications/guidelines/ and view the School's statement on the 'Student Documents' web site.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name:	**Caroline Christie**
Your student no:	**540031377**
Return address for this certificate:	**Gladwyn, Truro, Cornwall. TR1 3ES**
Degree/Programme of Study:	**EdD Educational Leadership**
Project Supervisor(s):	**Dr Alexandra Allan** **Dr Hazel Lawson**
Your email address	**cpascoe@trurohigh.co.uk**
Tel:	**07800851246**

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: ..... **date:** 5th June 2013

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must ***not be included*** *in your work. It can be kept for your records.*

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: August 2011

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 540031377

Title of your project:
What are the understandings/perceptions and interpretations of identity/identities for Headteachers of independent selective girls' schools?

Brief description of your research project:

This research will look at the way that practising Head teachers of independent selective girls' schools understand and interpret their identity/identities as educational professionalsprofessional practitioners; furthermore it will examine how their identity/identities inform their practice. A potential aim is to consider what influences are perceived to impact upon the Headteacher's identity/identities and hence (as a head teacher myself) I will also attempt to gain further understanding and appreciation of my own personal identity/identities in this role.

The research undertaken will take an interpretative approach and will be in two distinct parts as described below:

Part 1:
Participants will be asked to take digital images that represent their individual understanding/perception of their identity/identities. These images will form the basis of visual prompts for Part 2 and data for interpretation.

Part 2:
The photographic images will be used as prompts as part of face to face conversations with the participants to establish a more in depth understanding of their perceptions and interpretations of the images and their relationship with their perceived identity/ies.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):
The research is intended to be conducted on a small scale. Whilst twelve Head teachers will be invited to participate, I am anticipating that not all will be willing and so the final number of research participants will be less than 12. All the Head teachers who will initially be invited to participate began their Headship at the same time as myself, in 2009. All the participants will therefore be current serving Head teachers of selective girls' independent schools, who are within their first 5 years as Headteacher (prior to 2009, which was the year that I become a Headteacher). They will share the following interests and commonalities:

- They will all have volunteered to participate in the research and share some mutual interest in Headteacher identity
- They all lead independent selective girls' schools which have Primary and Secondary sections under their leadership.
- They are all known by me in a personal capacity, but primarily through professional organisations and as colleagues within my region.
- They will all be within the first 5 years of their first Headship

There will be no selection of participants on the basis of ethnicity, education, religion, sexual orientation, marital or family status and socio-economic status. However, the Head teachers may all be female as there are few male Head teachers of independent selective girls' schools.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: August 2011

Likewise the participants will not be restricted to schools confined to a particular region of the country, within a certain bracket based on school fees, examination league tables or historical or religious background of the school.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs)

As all the Headteachers are leading well known and prestigious educational institutions, it is therefore imperative that ethical issues, especially those of anonymity, address not only the participants but also the educational institutions they lead.

Informed Consent:
Participation is voluntary for all – each participant will be asked if they wish to take part in the study. The purpose of the project will be made clear to all participants, through an initial face to face meeting and via the Research Explanatory Notes that will accompany the Consent form. Details on how their images and other data are to be used will be discussed at the initial meeting and summarised in the Research Explanatory Notes that will accompany the Consent form.

A written consent form will be signed by participant and researcher, and a copy kept by the participant and the researcher. I am anticipating that some participating Head teachers may feel the need to gain verbal or written consent from their Senior Leadership Team and/or Chair of Governors.

The researcher's contact details, and those of the supervisors, are made clear on these forms, and participants are told that they can withdraw at any time from the process.

If a head teacher wishes to include images of her/himself or school-identifying items (eg school logo) these may be used as part of the research process but not included as images in the final thesis. If a headteacher wishes to include images of other people (other adults or students), then the headteacher must gain consent from these people, using the "Third Party Consent Form" and again the images may be used as part of the research process but not included as images in the final thesis.

Confidentiality:
The conversations will not be entirely confidential as they will be used for the purposes of research and the final research thesis will ultimately be in the public domain. But throughout the research process, every attempt will be made to retain anonymity.

Furthermore, the researcher will not pass on any raw data, information about the participants or their school, except to the participant themselves and the research supervisors. The research supervisors will only be told the pseudonyms of the participants and their related institutions and a key to these pseudonyms will be securely stored in a different location from the data.

Oral data will be digitally recorded, and transcribed records will only be seen by the participant, the researcher and supervisors (if necessary), and if extracts appear in the research report they will be anonymous. "Member Checking" will occur in that the transcripts will be referred to the participant to ensure they are accurate, whether there is any aspect of the section the participant would like to change or delete and also to check for complete confidentiality.

Electronic data will be kept on a password protected private computer, with a backup on the researcher's password protected private university network area under MyExeter. Both of these are protected by anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Paper copies of transcripts and research data will be kept in a securely in a locked cabinet when not in use, or near to the researcher's person when travelling/ being studied. At the end of the research any such data will be shredded. At no time will data be stored, used or taken to the researcher's place of work. The transcribed data will not use identifiable names/terms than the actual names of the participants or the institutions.

Anonymity:
Participants will not be named in the write up of the research. Data, whether images or conversations, will be anonymised in order to not reveal the identity of the Headteacher; pseudonyms will be used. Participants will be asked to generate their own pseudonyms. Every effort will be made to ensure that no output will provide information which might allow a participant or school to be identified from a combination of data extracts and contextual information. Hence it is important that all the participants have sight of the research write up as it is being developed and the issues of Gatekeeping are kept at the forefront.

I will be asking the participants for information about the situational context of taking each photograph i.e. date and time and why. However, the guidelines for the taking of images will be agreed and will include:

1. No inclusion of students/pupils attending the respective schools as consent has not been sought.
2. If other adults are included in the photograph it is essential that the researcher gains their informed consent.
3. Retaining full anonymity may restrict the choice of the images, therefore, if an image that depicts any item that would lead to identification of their school e.g. school crest; there must be agreement between the researcher and participant that it can be used for research purposes but will not be published as part of the thesis
4. The participants are to make the final decision about which photographs can be kept by the researcher and used in the thesis. Prior to publication, in my final thesis, of any specific images; I will gain additional written consent from any of the participants to ensure that such publication will not compromise their position and anonymity.

Respect:
Especially as the participants are colleagues of mine and known to me, it will be vital to ensure that their views and perceptions are listened to, respected and represented accurately. As a practising Headteacher myself it will be important not to be judgmental of the participant's responses and to make it clear that I am not seeking to find the 'best' and 'most effective' Headteacher identity/identities but purely to gain a deeper understanding of the concept.

Gatekeeping:
The collection of data may involve carrying out research within the participants' working environment and school. However, although it is essential to work within the school's procedures of being a visitor to the school, it will not be necessary to hold a separate Criminal Records Disclosure as a researcher as there is no intention to work directly with children.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Visual images
Collection:
In order to meet the aims of the research questions the participants will be asked to take photographic images, using their own cameras, which reflect their Headship identity/identities.
Digital images can either be sent electronically or brought in person to the interview. to a research specific email address. The images and associated information regarding them will be stored as outlined above. At all times every effort will be made to ensure that anonymity is maintained for example by coding the images.

Analysis:
The images will be interpreted together by the participants and the researcher through narrative conversations. They will be used as prompts for the conversations. The images will then be subjected

to interpretative thematic analysis. Appropriate software eg NVIVO may be used to assist the analysis process.

Narrative Conversations
Collection:
The conversations will take place in a face to face meeting with the participants and will be recorded digitally and later transcribed. Audio data will be downloaded from recording devices at the earliest possible opportunity and then deleted from the device. The participant will be reminded of this; if the participant is unwilling to be digitally recorded then the researcher has the option of recording the conversation in written note form.

See the Confidentiality section for details of secure storage

Analysis:
At the end of each stage of the research and following the narrative conversation, each participant will be reminded of the how the data will be used and what the next stage will be (if this is appropriate). The data will be transcribed and analysed qualitatively using conservational analysis techniques. A copy of transcriptions will be forwarded, and any changes/ omissions adapted on transcripts as requested by participant

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

In depth details of the research content must not be disclosed to a third party as this could be detrimental to both the participant and their school which in turn may affect the reputation and performance of the school. If visiting a school for research purposes the nature of the research will not be disclosed by the researcher to any students/pupils or members of staff.

***This form should now be printed out**, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

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This project has been approved for the period: 2013 **until** 2014:

By): ....date:.....January 2013.....

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: August 2011

APPENDIX THREE: Research Guidelines for the Participating Headteachers.

Narrative Research into the identity construction of Headteachers in all Girls' Selective Independent School

Research Explanatory Notes for participating Headteachers

Dear Headteacher,

I would like to invite you to take part in my research which aims to examine the understandings/perceptions and interpretations of identity/identities for Headteachers of independent selective girls' schools. My intention is to conduct a small-scale research which is part of my Doctorate of Education (EdD) programme at the University of Exeter.

About the study

My research aims to investigate the following\ questions:

- In what ways do Headteachers of independent selective girls' schools consider that their identity/identities inform their practice?
- What influences do Headteachers of an independent selective girls' schools perceive as impacting upon their identity/identities as Headteachers?
- How does the researcher's sense of identity as a Headteacher of an independent selective girls' schools develop through the research?

Your involvement in the study

I would like to conduct a small-scale research project by asking participants to take a number of digital images that represent their individual understanding/perception of their headship identity/identities. These images will then be used as visual prompts

for a face-to-face narrative conversation. This conversation will last for approximately an hour and will be audio-recorded.

Whilst the images focus on your identity and role, on occasion you may wish to include other people in your images. If you do this please ensure that you inform them of the purposes of the image (that they will be used in a research project) and please ask them for their consent to be photographed. For ethical purposes can I request that your images do not contain children or young people. You will be asked to choose which photographs that I can keep as part of my research work and which images can be used in the final report.

Extracts from your narrative conversations will also be used in the final research report. However, you will be sent a transcript of this conversation shortly after the interview and you will be asked to check that you are happy with what has been recorded.

Ethical approval for the project has been provided by the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter. Ethical codes around anonymity, confidentiality and security of data are included within this and I am happy to discuss any of these with you. Please, let me know if something is not clear so that I can provide the necessary explanations.

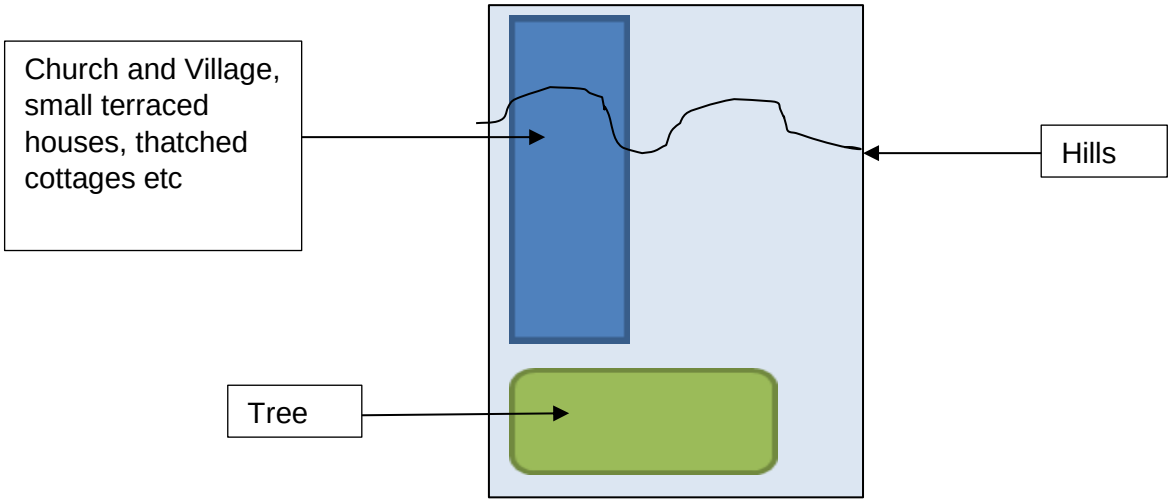
APPENDIX FOUR: Image and Revised Transcript of Headteacher A to show the reflective memos and transcript colour coding.

Reflective Notes Upon Receiving the Image.

Headteacher A's image with the initial reflections which, as the researcher, I noted down upon receiving the image. These notes served two purposes:

1. To use as prompts during the narrative conversation and also reminders of the some of the questions I had with the image.

2. To try and position ontologically the Headteacher's image and hence her narrative conversation as I felt that this exercise would assist with the co-construction of her identities.



- Has Headteacher A misunderstood the task as there is only one photograph?
- Does the single image show a holistic approach to identity or an over cautious one which is rigid and restricted by one image?
- However, single image may be rich in visual potential allowing unforeseen narratives to emerge
- School images are not included, is her personal identity more prominent
- Has the image been deliberately taken or was it by chance – need to discover this
- Images are often fleeting/transitory, this landscape seems static
- Concerns that the image imposes reductive stance and simplicity which tends towards a formulaic approach rather than encouraging the individual's creativity – has this image and hence the narrative been over-thought?
- Has she 'taken' the photograph or 'made' the photograph?
- Church, signifies religious/spiritual
- Village scene – sense of community
- Tree denotes organic process/outlook
- Is the location significant or the content of the image?
- Will she use the image metaphorically or literally?

Narrative Conversation Transcript Coding Key

Critical Incident

Life history/previous Experiences

Core Identity

Personal Identities

Professional Identities

Public Identities

Voice of Others

Unresolved tensions

Resolved tensions

Behaviours

The coding was based on the key themes which were highlighted in the adapted model.

It was decided with the participants that the unbridged version of the transcripts would not be published in the thesis as it contained identifiable comments and information as well as personal interaction that was believed to not add any value to the data.

The conversation began with everyday pleasantries and some personal chat. Although the exact content is not included it confirmed that Headteacher A and myself did have a good rapport.

The narrative conversation also began with my introduction and my asking if there were any questions about the research.

I was quite intrigued by your comments that you found this exercise challenging? [**Comment: Evidence that the method of using images is outside of their comfort zone**] Was it the taking of the photographs or the idea of reflecting upon your identity? *I found this whole exercise really difficult probably as I had not really thought about my identity nor my role in this way.* [**Comment: Suggests that the use of images initiates a different form and level of reflexivity and reflective practice. A further conversation confirmed that Head teacher A thought that identity was important but that other priorities occur and considering your own identity becomes lower on the list. It is not that head teacher A does not think the concept is not important.**] *Although we did have that presentation several years ago at the conference and at the time I had gone way from the session committed to reflective practice and also to become more aware of my identity. But as usual other tangible priorities and the busyness of life just get in the way I suppose. Reflective practise and giving yourself time to contemplate your day was the bread and butter of our training as teachers and yet it seems to be one aspect that I have let go – so the first challenge was to begin to do the reflective thinking. As a Headmistress I would like to think that I am very aware of and know why I want to be the Headmistress but this exercise has made me think back to several unsuccessful interviews I had before being appointed to [name]. You prepare for the interview, do endless research and become emotionally attached to the school throughout the application process. The overriding question I asked myself was* [**Comment: This raises the issue of whether identity is formed by the discourses that arise from the school or whether identity informs the ethos of a school. HT A seems to imply that identity is moulded and influenced by the discourses surrounding the person.**] "*what does the School want?" (or should I say "Who" does the School want?). If there is a strong sense of who they want then I tended to start acting and being who I thought they wanted. But it is difficult to sustain and in this job you cannot be someone you*

are not [**Comment: HT A suggests that agency has a big part to play in determining identity**.] – *I am sure that is why I didn't get those jobs it's because they found me out and I was not being myself. So in essence I think your identity, by which I mean knowing and being true* [**Comment: Thinks that there is a core identity and in a further conversation it was confirmed that this core identity originates from birth i.e. her upbringing and the values that are instilled at an early age. So is because of nurture not nature because race and gender determine one type of identity and then life experiences such as career instils another type of identity**] *to yourself, is really important. Perhaps just being aware of and being confident in who you are is enough; because during the day there is often insufficient time to think back and consider whether this decision or that particular action or that behaviour is truly reflective of my identity – I think nothing would be done if that was needed. But I hope that I have a strong sense of who I am and what type of leader I am striving and hoping to be!*

Was the reflective thinking the only challenge you found and if not how did you overcome difficulties?

As I say I had not really considered my identity in such detail before. But by just thinking deeply and reflecting upon[**Comment: Reflection and focussing upon oneself allows her to understand and help construct identity.**] *what it means to be a Headmistress has really helped clarify my thinking and then I felt that I did not have the vocabulary to verbalise nor the previous experience of such a discussion to say what I mean* – [**Comment: Suggest that images provides a different way of verbalising identity**] *even in appraisal who you are as a Headmistress is not discussed as it is assumed that you know who you are. I hope I am making sense? I know we shouldn't do this but it is all too easy during a busy day to just be absorbed by either tasks or other commitments. As any good Headmistress is told to do, I do take time out to reflect and think objectively and subjectively but I have now realised that this important time is always focused on other people and more importantly my school. In hindsight I thought I was thinking about myself but in reality* [**Comment: Difficulty in constructing identity as an autonomous concept but more a manifestation of a reaction to experiences and other people confirming a social construction perspective.**] *t was predominantly about my staff and the school. Even as far as reflecting on how I have dealt with a staffing issue or made a decision; I have rarely put the spot light on myself – it has invariably been about the impact of my actions on other people and also dissecting how they have reacted both positively and negatively towards me. Maybe I have not had the confidence to look closely at myself in this way*[**Comment: Using images in research is also a way of retaining confidence**] *before or perhaps I am hopeless at being a critical friend to myself. I think as you work your way up the ranks of education and in particular when you are a Deputy Head there are plenty of avenues where you can gain feedback from and plenty of colleagues who you can discuss your performance and your style with;* [**Comment: Suggestion of external influences such as other people, the work place, reactions from people and also relationships with people mould identity. A suggestion of a coach also reinforces the importance of agency.**] *and it seems OK to talk about yourself. Whereas being a Headmistress and at the top of the organisation I always think that colleagues will now think I am selfish if I want to talk about me – I know many Heads have a coach which seems like a good idea simply for this very reason…to put the spotlight on yourself for once. I was anticipating that headship would be very lonely as everyone tells you so but also I think it is easy to neglect yourself as well.*

So in changing the focus onto myself I have found it really difficult and challenging to find my, how can I say, myself and my voice, [**Comment: Use of images provides a voice also highlights how difficult it is for us to narrate our identity. Further conversation confirmed that by 'voice' HT A believes that with a consistent and strong identity all your actions and how you react and also what you say is about being in-line with your identity. It should be a constant message and a voice that is true to your identity and who you are.**] *in that when I reflect is it really me*

that is speaking? (metaphorically of course as I have not gone mad and started talking to myself) or is it me being either over-critical or over-complimentary depending on how I feel at the time or what I need to hear at a particular point in time. I suddenly realised that gaining feedback as a Headmistress is very much gauging and reacting to the reaction of others – you can tell can't you if a decision is popular or not, or if you have said something that has a differing effect to the one that you think it should. Very rarely, even with the Chair of Governors can you have a truly honest and true conversation about yourself.

I suppose that is the delight of coming to Conference and having access to peers you know and trust to have those reflective conversations with – explain further how do you think identity is shaped by other people's reactions towards what you do in your role?

That is something that I am not sure about and this exercise has made me think about in more detail – am I reacting and reflecting in a way that people expect me to [**Comment: Suggests a level of conformity and expectation regarding identity**.] *because I am the Headmistress or am I reacting in accordance to the ethos and expectations of the School or I am being myself and portraying my morals and my virtues and reflecting my true identity? I suppose I have been a Headmistress for some years now and staff come to me with issues half knowing how I am going to react and what opinions I am going to have on the matter – is that because I have become predictable? Have a strong identity? More informed because I have the bigger picture? Reflect the strong ethos of the school? Or is it a combination of all those and many other factors? But it does worry me when staff come to me and say "I know what you are going to say but I need to ask anyway* [**Comment: Further conversation confirmed that HT A believes that having a consistent identity is a positive thing and is largely influenced by the context of the school – contextual identity.**] *…." and then proceed to ask or tell me something that they know what the answer will be. Is that the right way to be and to lead the school forward? Perhaps it is not as simple as that and in the main it is a combination of all three unless you conscientiously think about from where that thought, decision or action originates from. Have I answered your question?*

You touched on several points there – I think the first thing to say is that there is no right or wrong way to perceive or express one's identity additonally my research is certainly not aiming to look for the 'best'[**Comment: Advantage of using images is that because they are very personal to the individual, they cannot possibly be the 'best' or the 'right' image**] It is more about understanding your perceptions and thoughts about your identity. One thing that did intrigue me was if you think that identity is possibly a combination of a variety of factors – can you explain your thoughts behind taking one photographic image?

Again I thought about this long and hard and I was tempted to portray all the aspects of my role which would have ended up being a million discreet and separate photographs which I thought would just document me in my role rather than fully explaining it. Also I would then have the dilemma of which photo would really describe and illustrate my identity, some images would be more significant than others and also I was worried that this volume of photographs would reveal my anonymity and cause you stress – you would throw me off the research!

But then it dawned on me that actually what I do is very integrated and holistic[**Comment: It is appreciated that the impact of identity is far reaching and in some ways it is not possible to specifically highlight the extent of how identity can be shown. This resulting in a difficulty in verbalising the meaning and impact of identity**.] *in nature; issues and tasks for Head teachers cannot stand in isolation or be completely discreet from other aspects of the school, other people, themselves, me or the ethos of the school. In every aspect of my working day issues are interlinked, so maybe my identity lives in all aspects of my role – much more than I really appreciated and anyway isn't that what should happen anyway. Therefore I wanted to*

portray that interconnectedness [**Comment: One of the advantages of images is that they provide subjective connections and meanings can be made**.] *and the holistic nature of the role where everything sort of merges, where there are no boundaries or divisions and where there are no separate or discreet tasks or approaches that mean 'this is what being a Headmistress is all about'. There is also the expectation that parts of a school and my role as Headmistress are interrelated and one of the same thing* [**Comment: Identity is holistic and not compartmentalised**] *– the most obvious one is that academic monitoring is closely linked with the pastoral care within a school; therefore I think it important to portray this oneness but I do not know if it is the school that is the driver of this linkage or the Headmistress? I am not sure if it is my identity that is driving this at all or am I just integrating myself into the ethos* [**Comment Social constructed identity**.] *and ways of a particular school because that has not changed since my arrival?*

So having emphasised the interconnectedness of aspects of your role can you explain this further by relating your identity to the image you have produced? *I hope it is alright but I have to tell you first of all this view is actually nothing to do with the school and is not even in or near the grounds. But it is very special location* [**Comment: Because the images are taken by the individual they are intentional and have particular meaning for the person.**] *to me and does generate particular memories for me which are outside of my Headship role but they are significant as they are part of me and have, if you like defined* [**Comment: Identity constructed from past experiences and memories. Also it is influenced by home life and other roles the HT takes on.**] *who I am and therefore how I approach certain decisions within school. I hope that is OK as I was not sure if you wanted pictures of the school.*

No not at all – you had the freedom to do what you thought was right for you and portray yourself in the way that you wanted to. Explain why the location is important to you?

Its funny isn't it none of us like new situations or new circumstances to deal with, yet in our day to day work we seem to be doing this all the time and everyone else expects us to be able to cope, to lead everyone else through new challenges and more importantly know what to do and what the solution is. Most of the time I can cope with these challenges and the expectations placed upon me from staff, Governors and also you lot; but then sometimes it is quite good to revert to somewhere [**Comment: In a second conversation I confirmed that this was referring to the fact that when something challenging occurs or a new situation arises there can be uncertainty which impacts on the stability of identity. Therefore, in order to regain focus and confidence the HT reverts to a core sense of belonging and a stable predictable identity.**] *(and I don't always mean to physically disappear somewhere – can you imagine that in an event of a crisis or making redundancies the Headmistress disappears to have some* [**Comment: Professional and personal identity seem to be separate.**] *'me' time! I also mean mentally reflecting upon a time and a place) but somewhere that is familiar and almost 'comforting' because I need to be reassured every now and again that I am not a fraud and no-one is looking to catch me out. This location does that for me and I am able to restore and renew myself to* [**Comment: Reverting to a core identity is able to restore the HT's identity so that they can cope with new situations and change**] *get more energy and motivation. I suppose I certainly need to have my confidence restored so mentally and physically going somewhere that is special and significant does that for me – are you not the same?*

I suppose I have not ever thought of a particular place, even if it is memorable or significant as giving me confidence. But is what you are saying the emotions and feelings associated with that place are what gives you the confidence? I think I get that from doing things I know I am good at for example knitting or sport and being with people who believe in me such as my family or meeting up with old friends who have nothing to do with school. What you are saying is that we need, perhaps reassurance is not the right word but reminding, of who we

fundamentally are and the reasons why we are, who we are and make the decisions we make and believe in the things we believe in. I suppose that it is it in a nut shell from my perspective. Almost reminding us that we are not infallible and we do have a 'soul' if that's the right word to use. What is it about the place in the picture that gives you confidence? Or is it the place or the subjects within the photograph?

A bit of both – I feel confident, happy [**Comment: Confidence plays a big part in the construction and understanding of identity**.] *and knowledgeable about myself when I see this view but it was not until I took the photograph did I really fully think carefully about it – I think I have cheated a bit because I should have perhaps thought totally about the content before taking the snap rather to a certain extent fitting me to the photograph.* [**Comment: Disadvantage of the method but also highlights the transient nature of the 'truth' and that the data collected is only valid for that point in time.Also reflecting and thinking of images may cause there to be interpretations made that were not significant when the image was taken.**] *Although now I do think I have done a bit of both. I had an overall idea of what I wanted to create but also more ideas have come out of seeing the image – I hope that does not spoil your research! One idea I did have before taking the photograph was I wanted the perspective of the picture to come forward and end with the tree which is me* [**Comment: In the second conversation it was confirmed that the way that the HT displays identity is mainly because of the choice they make. This suggests that they agree with a degree of agency. But the outward manifestations of their identity is influenced by a core identity, personal and professional identity that is 'contained' within them. The HT described it was an onion of layers with identities being present but not evident and the multifaceted public identity being an interpretation of the others.**] *– I climbed onto the garden to get the right angle to have the Church furthest away, then the houses and then 'me' in the forefront. I did this deliberately because the varied importance I give to the …. I suppose layers that make up me. In a school environment there is the belief that the Headmistress has ultimate responsibility and is accountable for everything that goes on so I wanted to put the tree in the foreground as the final and outer layer* [**Comment: An indication that social construction does form the identity**] *if you like.*

Is that you as a person or you in the role of a Headmistress?

Both of course, you must know that at times it is very difficult to separate out and disassociated yourself from[**Comment: Whilst the HT sees professional and personal identities as separate, there is a conflict in that her type of school, which is boarding, means that the professional role is dominant**.] *such a role that you have to live inside and breathe through* [**Comment: Whist throughout the conversation the narrative has been holistic but this bit contradicts this image and stance.**] *term time especially at [name] which has boarders and a 24-7 community. Although sometimes I feel at work I do put on an act, underneath it is still fundamentally me and then at home I have to be very careful not to be too 'headmistressy'* [**Comment: Indication that her identity is conforming to what is required**] *so I would say that the two are so interlinked it is the one and the same.*

So to start with are the hills in the back ground. Although my hurdles to become a Headmistress were not mountains (although in my assemblies I tell the girls they were huge mountains! ***What followed here was a conversation about assembly ideas and I deemed this irrelevant to the research****), there were still things to overcome. The biggest issue for me with hills was that you could not see the horizon, the outcome*[**Comment: Indication that her identity is evolving and that as it is constructed and deconstructed sometimes you cannot predict or have total agency over identity**.] *and the destination – so much of the journey thorough my career has been chance and in the right place at the right time. At each stage I was climbing the hill with no view of the horizon.* [**Comment: In the second conversation HT confirmed that what she meant by this was that a final identity was never**

achieved as our lives are about continually learning and developing. Also she was questioning who would be the judge of whether a final identity had been achieved.]

What sort of hurdles?

Well, some things were personal, such as having the confidence to think I could do the job and building up the necessary professional experience to make my CV good enough to be considered. I took my lead [**Comment: In the second conversation it was confirmed that she believes that some aspects of identity can be modelled from other people. Also she thinks that identity is certainly influenced by other people in terms of their reaction and response to your identity**.] *from [name], my second Headmaster who was really sensational and is still someone I believe to be my role model for my Headship.* [**Comment: Social construction of identity in that aspects of it can be modelled from others**.] *Then there were logistical hurdles to overcome principally ensuring that my children had good schools to go to and that my husband would still be able to continue with his work if I became a Headmistress and have to move. All of these things had to be considered but they were not surmountable and that's why I look back on them as hills rather than mountains.*

We then had conservation about the family that was not relevant or appropriate to include as research material.

Carry on explaining about your photograph?

The Church is interesting because my school has a strong Christian ethos and I had not really realised until I had to live out and portray the religious ethos, that in fact I am also very spiritual and have a strong religious stance. Are you and your school religious – I am always asked this by perspective parents and sometimes it is difficult to know what they are looking for in your answer!

I like your use of the word spiritual as opposed to religious and I think most GSA schools have a religious foundation and yet each school interprets this in differing ways and with differing extremes. Explain in more detail your stance and why the Church.

Exactly, you know how all schools say that they have a Christian ethos and I would argue that all independent schools now publish that, well I began to ask myself why this was. I think it's because of the traditional aspect that all religion and a Christian ethos portray. Parents and other people will equate tradition, good manners and treasured morals with this ethos and as a Headmistress of a [**Comment: In the second conversation she suggested that perhaps part of the core identity consists of an assumed identity that HT have. i.e. traditional, morally. She questioned whether the individual HT decided to display a conformed identity or whether the context moulded individuals into this core identity.**] *Christian school I assume that Parents and members of the community will expect me to uphold these values* [**Comment: Conformity and force identities**]*– it is about 'being it not just doing it', if you like these traditional and recognisable traits that they wish their daughters to have. I think as a Headmistress it is also about finding that 'special hidden bit' that sets you aside and also helps you to maintain your dignity for and of others.*

Before we go on can you anything else you would like to add about your own spirituality as you called it? (this question was asked as I felt that her body language indicated that she had not finished with this topic).

Well I like the Chapel and the role it has within the school community but it is a lot more than that. I look upon spirituality as forming a way that I benchmark my actions, decisions and the way I perform against. I feel that it does form part of my inner self [**Comment: The recognition of a core identity**] *of who I am and that it does shape how I am and what I do. Otherwise how*

do we get our morale compass to guide us through life? When I was younger I thought this would come from a different source other than the Church and Christianity and to a certain extent I tried to fight this, however, as I grow older I have resigned to the fact that it is actually a tried and tested source of knowing and also a structure which encourages us to try and understand and interpret ourselves. Also when things are not going too well spirituality offers are very firm foundation that been the same for thousands of years and I so I am happy to put my faith into something that is long standing and again recognisable.

We had a comfort break here and returned to general personal chat.

We've covered the church, was there anything else to add or shall we go on?

Probably not, this is really difficult and I am more conscious of what little time we have left! Anyway the houses I have used to represent the community both within and alongside the School. A major part of my role is to relate with and deal with people from all walks of life which are reflected in such a community. [**Comment: Community identity based on conformity and expectations of others.**] *I base much of my role on relationships and these can be very complex at times but more importantly they adapt and evolve over time. Whilst the buildings of a School, or a village, and the physical environment of a department remains the same (unless you can afford huge amounts of investment and development) the dynamics amongst people within the various departmental segments of a School change and even as Headmistress I try and keep my relationships with staff on an even keel but at times it changes for a variety of reasons. Working within a community is also about knowing the people and also having the motivation to recognise their needs – like this hamlet of houses I think as a Headmistress you need to have some connection somewhere with every individual in the school.*

Also the houses represent the community and possibly family feel within my School in that it gives individuals a sense of identity and a place to belong. Not only do we try and conform (for example paint our houses a complimentary colour or keep our gardens tidy or put the recycling out on the right day), there are things that are expected when we live within a certain community. If you play music loudly then people will judge that as unacceptable behaviour and therefore we don't. I am always interested in how different schools have their own language and sayings – its quirky but also about living in a community and having an identity for that community. I am sure at school we behave in a way that everyone expects to behave and be.

Can I interrupt and ask how does your identity influence your relationships with staff?

I think I have tried to portray my identity in the collection of houses in the picture because I have a very collective and collaborative approach to [**Comment: Collective and collaborative approach**] *leadership, rarely do I impose change or initiatives and new decisions are decided by working parties. I am a firm believer of distributed leadership and* [**Comment: In a further conversation HT A said she was happy to share and dilute her identity amongst her colleagues and that she felt that whilst she had modelled some of her identity on others then she felt that she would like to do the same**.] *allow others to take on the leadership of various areas of the School. Some people say this is risky but maybe it reflects the fact that I am confident in* [**Comment: HT seems comfortable with people having differing identities, the question is the concept of distributed leadership caused more conformity of leadership**.] *my ability to remote manage and also the fact that the vision of the school is spelt out and known by all the staff – so they know not to go off track! We put so much emotion into this job and into others it is important to share the burden.*

Other colleagues begin arriving and this puts pressure on the conversation

Also I think the home is very important in my identity – we put so much into the role and also expose so much of ourselves; it is nice to have a home we can hide away in[**Comment: Home and family life is a haven where professional identity can be hidden and a new identity taken on – which contradicts with the holistic approach cited earlier in the narrative.**] *and be private and be ourselves.* [**Comment: Indicates an core identity that is separate from the professional identity**] *Of course if something happens at home it will show at work – how often do we have to pick people up and help with problems that are not related to school. These family times for me are self-fulfilling and are not about the community and a co-operative approach. A bit like DH Lawrence's poem "Afternoon in School – the Last Lesson" - the teacher always leaves a little bit of energy for themselves and I think that is right and important for family life.*

That was why I was keen to use the tree as a way to represent me and [**Comment Using the images as subjective interpretations rather than photographic elicitation**.] *I got the idea from your silk painting of the tree of life. A tree embraces life from the individual leaves* [**Comment: An appreciation that identity does not just have an impact on the obvious aspects of reality but also causes subtle and less obvious effects**.] *right down to the roots – it provides almost something for everyone. As a Headmistress, even though you work towards trying to collaboration, there is a need to be the expert in all situations. I have never tried to make everyone happy as that is impossible but I think it is about knowing that people are different.*

Why did you want the tree to be in the foreground?

I suppose because this research is about me, I wanted to preserve a sense of authority and also a sense of value. The school centres around the Headmistress [**Comment: This stresses the importance of HT identities**] *so they are pivotal individuals so why should I not have centre-stage. In the photograph the tree is separate from the community of the 'school' so to speak because I do like to maintain some distance between me and school sometimes; for example I do not socialise with my staff. Although the roots may come close to the houses the connections are work related and striving for the ultimate visionary goal not a social connection.*

Can you explain more why a tree in particular?

I think teaching is a bit like a tree, it is organic and evolves. Every year is not the same for the tree and also for the school, different cohorts of students makes it very different. But I suppose the academic year is a bit like the seasons as each term is characterised by certain events and traditions. My office is like a habitat [**Comment: An organic view of identity**] *which supports life at many different levels but in particular about the emotional relationships that you have with all your staff, students, parents and Governors. That emotional relationship and empathy needs to be reciprocated and so like the leaves on the tree – the twigs support the leaves and the leaves give the twigs a role in life!*

I read somewhere a quote by Gerald Moran who talks about light and shade working environments. Someone in a leadership position casts light and shade environments for everyone to work within, like the tree casts shade over certain areas. However, the important thing is that the tree (ie me as the Headmistress) knows how to support everyone when they are in the shade. I have used that metaphor a lot – makes a good speech day theme.

Also the tree is like the ice-berg model in that there are so many roots and inner workings that are hidden away from view. [**Comment: Whilst she is conscious of how her identity is being manifested at work, she feels that there is a lot more to her that remains hidden and out of view of others and herself. Also how do we know that all of us is being made visible?**]*This sums up the role of being a Headmistress in that much of what you do is unrecognised or unseen so as part of your identity there needs to an inner belief in yourself and also trust, reassurance and*

many other traits as often you need to give yourself the praise and reassurance that you give so readily to others. Its like the trunk will be consistent year after year but the amount of leaves will be different – in the same way that fundamentally you are the same each year but in reality the way you use your identity will be different. [**Comment: Appreciation of agency**] *I hope that I am making sense.*

If you took the photograph again would you omit or include anything different?

I would have wanted to include people I think as they contribute hugely to another person's identity. You cannot have an identity just by itself it has to be associated with a person and yet a person can be without an identity. So I think people are very important and it is how you relate to them that confirms or determines the identity.

Reflective Memos Following Headteacher A's Narrative Conversation

By part of the research I knew Headteacher A extremely well and hence it was difficult to write reflective notes without assuming her voice or indeed contradicting her narrative. The purpose of my reflective notes at this stage of the research was to:

1. Ensure that I fully understood her narrative and that my interpretation of her narrative is authentic and acceptable to her.

2. To examine the relationship between the themes within her narrative to build up a visual picture and to construct the Identity Plot.

- Strong sense of a central core which links all other aspects
- Core is hidden and not public
- Peels back layers
- Behaviours, tension and Voice of others target specific aspects of her overall identity
- Circular onion representation will reinforce her holistic view, the wholeness of her narration and her embracing and encompassing stance towards others.