A kind of currency or just a quiet pride? Exploring career journeys, academic prestige and impact of senior teaching fellowships for women in HE

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Abstract

The persistent gender gap in higher education, in leadership and salary terms, is well-established in the literature and often discussed using a pipeline metaphor, for example, addressing a leaky pipeline or building the pipeline. Mid-career women in higher education represent the pipeline, and yet research has identified that women frequently hold teaching and administrative roles which lack prestige and status compared to research activity and are therefore held back in their career progression. This study makes an original contribution to knowledge by exploring the lesser-heard voices of mid-career women within a research-intensive university who have achieved senior categories of teaching fellowships for their achievements in teaching. It asks whether the value now being placed on teaching in a neoliberal management climate is offering new opportunities for those who champion teaching to accrue academic prestige in a gendered prestige economy in higher education.

The study adopted a feminist, interpretivist, case study approach, informed by standpoint theory, to explore the career experiences of fifteen mid-career women who champion teaching within one higher education institution in England. Insider research alongside visual and narrative methods in the form of drawn career journey maps and narrative interviews resulted in a set of richly contextualised data. Data were analysed using a thematic, iterative approach, drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework.

The study confirms previous findings from research about the existence of a masculinised culture and prestige economy in higher education which can hinder women's career progression. A new finding is that women do gain prestige by achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships, with prestige experienced in various ways, which can also result in a sense of increased career capital. Overall, the findings revealed that multiple factors shaped the participants' career journeys and ambitions. These included the importance of achieving a balance between family and work responsibilities, feeling valued and being of value in their teaching roles and having a sense of belonging within the institution. The findings have implications for policy makers in senior management, human resources, and academic development teams to ensure inclusive routes for reward and recognition are provided for staff, often women, who champion teaching excellence. The study concludes with recommendations for further research.

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Glossary of abbreviations used

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy (now Advance HE)
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for Education
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
NTF	National Teaching Fellow/Fellowship
NTFS	National Teaching Fellowship Scheme
PFHEA	Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RQ	Research Question
SDA	Staff development account
SFHEA	Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TI	Teaching Intensive
T&L	Teaching and Learning
T&R	Teaching and Research
UTF	University Teaching Fellow/Fellowship
UTFS	University Teaching Fellowship Scheme

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Starting point

As an Academic Developer I have supported and applauded many colleagues in my institution on their path to gain HEA Senior and Principal Fellowships, University Teaching Fellowships and National Teaching Fellowships. Often, at award ceremonies, someone at my table would quietly comment "it's all women again". Whilst this wasn't always the case, I noted over time that at least two thirds were women. Reading around the issue highlighted a gap in research. Although the gender gap in higher education (HE) is itself widely explored in the literature, studies about teaching fellowship schemes have not specifically focused on gender, partly because these awards are relatively new and so are an emerging area of research. Reading about a gendered prestige economy in HE led me to question to what extent the high number of women in the institution seeking senior categories of teaching fellowships was about access to prestige. This question is especially pertinent in the current context in HE, in which there is heightened awareness of the gender gap, where women are more likely to hold teaching intensive roles which lack status compared to research, and where there is government and sector pressure to enhance and evidence teaching quality. This was the starting point for a study which explores the connections between gender, prestige and senior categories of teaching fellowships.

1.2 Introduction to thesis

This thesis explores academic prestige and impact of senior categories of HEA Fellowships and prestigious teaching fellowships for women in a research-intensive HE institution in England. It does so in the context of a gendered prestige economy in HE in which research holds a more privileged status than teaching and where women are more likely to hold teaching focused roles, are paid less than their male colleagues and are less likely to achieve senior level promotions (Coate et al., 2015; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Morley, 2014; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019). The thesis explores these themes by carrying out a feminist, interpretivist case study using insider research methods, drawing on rich narrative and visual data in the form of narrative interviews and career journey maps similar to "rivers of life"

and "leadership rivers" used in other educational research contexts (Burnard, 2000; Burns, 2000; Stevenson, 2013). The study explores the lived experiences of women as teaching champions in HE, their career journeys, their perceptions of prestige, their motivations and the impact of achieving special teaching status.

This chapter introduces the thesis overall. It begins by outlining the problem the thesis explores, whilst also introducing the key research concepts. It then provides an overview of the research including the aims, research questions, methods, contribution to new knowledge and why the research matters. Finally, some additional contextual information is provided, about the senior categories of teaching fellowships at the centre of this study, the institutional context where the study took place and some researcher background.

1.3   Problem statement

1.3.1 The gender gap in HE

By exploring career experiences of women in the HE sector this study aims to increase understanding of a widely acknowledged and persistent gender gap in HE which has been the focus of research for decades. Too few women progress through "the pipeline" (White, 2005) to senior academic and leadership positions in universities (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Jarboe, 2016, 2018; Manfredi et al., 2014; Morley, 2013a; Shepherd, 2017) and for many, their careers still "tend to stall" beyond the level of the promoted lecturer grade (Doherty & Manfredi, 2006, p. 553). This is not due to a shortage of women in the university recruitment pool. Women make up 55% of the total staff population, but only 29% of Vice Chancellors and 37% of senior leadership teams (Hewitt, 2020). The leadership gap in HE is mirrored by a gender pay gap which by comparison is high; the current gap is 15.9%, compared to the median level of 9.7% in other sectors (Hewitt, 2020). Whilst considerable variation exists across institutions, reflected in the gender composition of senior leadership teams and professorial gender gaps, the problem is widespread. Research shows that in the UK and beyond, women are frequently assigned roles which lack prestige and status, such as teaching and managing student welfare, leaving less time for high-status research and publication activity more likely to be rewarded in the promotions process (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fitzgerald, 2014).

Against a backdrop of criticism towards the HE sector, universities have attempted to address gender gaps. As such a rise of female Vice Chancellors has been seen in the UK from only 17% in 2013 (Jarboe, 2018) to 29% in 2020 (Hewitt, 2020). However, progress in closing the gap remains stubbornly slow. The latest sector report on equality published by Advance HE (2020) shows that more women than men work part-time, on fixed-term contracts and in lower salary bands, with a higher proportion of female than male academic leavers. Recent research indicates that the global Covid-19 pandemic and a shift to homeworking has made productivity much harder for women academics than their male colleagues (Fazackerley, 2020; Gabster et al., 2020; Pugh, 2021; Smith & Watchorn, 2020). For women of colour and ethnic minorities, the gender gap is far more extreme (Advance HE, 2020; Bradley, 2013; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fitzgerald, 2014; Kellerman & Rhode, 2014; Longman & Madsen, 2014; Morley, 2014). The gender gap, realised as a lack of equity in career progression and pay for women in HE, is therefore an underpinning rationale for this study whilst gender itself is an important concept which is further explored in the literature review in Chapter 2.

1.3.2 The prestige economy

Many different factors contribute to the leadership and gender pay gap in HE. One of these relates to a *prestige economy* which exists in the sector. Along with gender, the prestige economy, also referred to as academic prestige, is a key concept informing this study. "Prestige" in academia can be interpreted to mean "esteem" and "status" and is accumulated by, for example, achieving research funding, publications and invitations to give conference keynotes (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011a, 2012); it is linked to professional identity, underpinned by Bourdieu's ideas of capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1988). Accumulation of academic prestige results in career progression and promotion, which in turn leads to greater prestige being accrued (Blackmore, 2016). Research outputs drive national and international league tables and determine individual academic status and paths to promotion (Cashmore & Ramsden, 2009; Ramsden, 2009) in a prestige economy which has traditionally under-valued achievements in teaching and learning in HE (Blackmore et al., 2016; Young, 2006).

The concept of prestige is relevant to this study because it has recently been researched from the perspective of women in academia to help understand the gender gap in HE. Findings by Kandiko Howson et al., (2018), Coate and Kandiko Howson (2016), Coate et al., (2015) and Morley (2014) suggest that men are more able and more likely to access the prestige economy than women, supported by a masculinised, neoliberal and managerial culture within the sector. Their research shows that women are often relegated to less prestigious and more time-consuming teaching and administrative roles than men and are more likely to have caring responsibilities outside of work. This results in less time for women to pursue high-status research activity which in turn limits their outputs for the REF, and thus their access to prestige. Their work re-frames an existing problem by focusing on the concept of the prestige economy through an explicitly gendered lens. Although their work focuses specifically on the prestige economy, there is an overlap here with the broader concept of career capital, which incorporates a combination of capitals to support career progression, such as social, economic and cultural capital (Duberly & Cohen, 2010). For the same reasons that women might find it harder to accrue prestige in the prestige economy, research indicates that women find it harder than male colleagues to accumulate career capital (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Jayashree et al., 2020). The underpinning relevance of Bourdieu and career capital is re-visited in Chapter 2. The connection made in this thesis between the prestige economy and senior categories of teaching fellowships is explained in the following section.

1.3.3 A new currency in the prestige economy?

The UK HE sector has experienced a cultural shift in recent decades, moving from a self-regulated, publicly-funded sector characterised by academic freedom to one which is increasingly self-funded and competitive, shaped by neoliberal management values (Deem et al., 2007). A key change was the launch of tuition fees in 1998, with a dramatic and controversial increase in fees introduced for the sector in England in 2012. This was accompanied by government pressure upon the HE sector to professionalise teaching and to improve the student learning experience (BIS, 2011; Browne, 2010; Dearing, 1997; Gibbs, 2010). This call for professionalisation underpinned the release of the revised UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) in 2011 and a system for institutional

accreditation; these developments enabled institutions to award professional teaching status upon staff who teach in the form of HEA Fellowships (Law, 2011; Purcell, 2012).

The UKPSF is managed on behalf of the sector by Advance HE. Advance HE was formerly the Higher Education Academy (HEA) but for now, HEA Fellowships have retained their original title. Advance HE is a member-led, sector-owned charity for overseeing quality and standards in teaching and learning in HE, including equality and diversity, leadership and governance. The revised UKPSF, in addition to supporting the widespread take up of HEA Fellowships, was also designed to move continuing professional development beyond *initial* professional development for new lecturers to include those committed to teaching and learning at more senior levels (Parsons et al., 2012). HEA Fellowships were approved by HESA in 2014 as "equivalent to" a teaching qualification for HE, and sector-wide collection of data about numbers qualified to teach began. Where HEA Fellowships had previously been a "nice to have", HEA Fellowship data quickly gained currency as a potential marketing tool (Peat, 2014) as institutions maintained a nervous eye on league tables in a competitive market with a spotlight on teaching quality.

Many institutions in the UK set HEA Fellowship targets, expressed as key performance indicators (KPIs), and established Advance HE-accredited CPD schemes, in addition to their taught programmes, to enable them to award HEA Fellowships internally (Thornton, 2014). Institutions needed to encourage engagement in HEA Fellowships via incentives which included tying the HEA Fellowships into new probation and promotion policies (Peat, 2015; Pilkington, 2018). The impact has been powerful (Turner et al., 2013) and the number of accredited schemes and HEA Fellowships has grown considerably. At the start of 2022, there were over 112,000 HEA Fellows in the UK. Some of these developments are reflected in the international HE sector, with the number of global Fellowships and Advance HE accredited institutions also seeing rapid growth; there are now over 154,000 HEA Fellows globally. Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1 capture this growth in Fellowships.

Accredited institutions	2010-11	Jan 2022
UK	62	145
Non-UK	0	27
Total	62	172

Table 1.1 Increase in accredited institutional HEA Fellowship schemes 2010-22
Source: Advance HE, January 2022 (used with permission).

Figure 1.1 Increase in all categories of HEA Fellowships globally 2010-22
Source: Advance HE, January 2022 (used with permission).

Central academic development teams have expanded to design and deliver such accredited schemes. However, and of note for this research, institutions have also needed to draw on teaching and learning champions from within academic schools and other support teams to support the work required.

The collection of data on those qualified to teach, alongside university league tables and initiatives such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and National Student Survey (NSS), feed the sector's reliance upon metrics to promote institutional reputation and new narratives about teaching quality (Ball, 2012; Bowden, 2000; R. Brown, 2006; Gibbs, 2010;

Lynch, 2015). But in a highly competitive, fee-paying market (Molesworth et al., 2009), institutions also need teaching stories to tell in addition to metrics, and so stories about teaching excellence and innovation now matter beyond the teams who are responsible: the institution also benefits. A high percentage of teaching staff who hold prestigious categories of *senior* HEA Fellowship such as Senior Fellowship (SFHEA) or Principal Fellowship (PFHEA), and/or a healthy number of other senior teaching fellowships such as National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) or University Teaching Fellowship (UTF) status, can be promoted by an institution as evidence of a commitment to nurturing teaching innovation and leadership. In other words, evidence of a commitment to teaching has acquired a new currency and prestige which is directly linked to survival for institutions in a marketized, neoliberal and metrics-driven sector (Ball, 2012; BIS, 2012; Lynch, 2015; Molesworth et al., 2009) where student recruitment and research funding have become fiercely competitive.

A further outcome of this focus on teaching enhancement, and of relevance to this research, is a gradual re-balancing in the way teaching and research inform promotion decisions (Cashmore et al., 2013; Cashmore & Ramsden, 2009; Parker, 2008) to the effect that new routes to promotion have emerged for teaching intensive staff (Cashmore et al., 2013; HEA, 2013; Locke, 2014; Locke et al., 2016). Until recently, teaching intensive staff faced limited opportunities for academic promotion compared to colleagues with research profiles. Many institutions, not only post-1992 institutions, have now created a promotion track for Associate Professor and Professor titles based on teaching as well as research achievements (Fung & Gordon, 2016; Spowart et al., 2020). It is of significance to this research which explores career progression for women in HE, many of whom have teaching rather than research focused roles, that these developments now offer important potential opportunities for progression in an environment where previously research was a default requirement for promotion.

1.4   Overview of the research

1.4.1 A focus on mid-career women

This thesis covers new research ground by exploring the possibility of whether, in the current context of neoliberal marketisation, performativity and accountability about

teaching quality in HE, the current spotlight on teaching quality has created a new type of teaching-focused value in the prestige economy which in turn might create advantageous routes to career progression for women who invest time and effort in teaching.

The study departs from a focus on women academics in leadership, or aspiring to leadership (for example, Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Chesterman et al., 2005; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006, 2010; Longman & Madsen, 2014; Morley, 2014), to focus instead on the lesser-heard voices of mid-career women in HE. The term mid-career implies "middle stage", but it is acknowledged to be a broad term with no precise beginning or end. For this reason, it is likely to be the longest phase for women in academia, it may include women who are aspiring to senior leadership roles or who feel demotivated and "stuck" and may also include those who have either children or elderly parents to care for (Kandiko Howson et al., 2018). Mid-career is used in this thesis to include those who are at the level of Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor, Manager and Director, but who are neither in the early career stage nor in the most senior executive roles in the institution such as Dean, Pro-Vice Chancellor or Vice Chancellor.

1.4.2 Research aims

By examining the previously unexplored angle of professional recognition and reward for teaching through a gendered lens, it is intended that this research will shed new light on an old problem. The research aims to develop understanding about how to support women in HE, how to assist their career progression and, perhaps, feed the leadership pipeline (Kellerman & Rhode, 2017; Shepherd, 2017). It also adds to a small but growing body of research which explores the impact of professional recognition and reward schemes for teaching and learning in HE. More ambitiously, the findings might inform both institutional and sector policy and practice at a time when universities are under intense scrutiny about their procedures to support diversity and inclusion. Given that the question is not *"why"* but *"how"* to address the embedded leadership and gender gap (Jarboe, 2016, p.5), research which sheds light on the lived career experiences of mid-career women in HE is important and helpful, particularly research which gives women in the academy a voice. It is anticipated the findings will be transferable beyond the UK to many other countries and

regions which face similar challenges with the growing prevalence of a neoliberal academy and a gendered prestige economy.

1.4.3 Research questions

The questions for this study were informed by the underpinning concepts and the findings from the literature review (Chapter 2). They were also shaped by a commitment to feminist research theory and ethics in which context is integral to the research and in which the lived experiences and voices of the women taking part can be heard (Haraway, 1988; Hesse-Biber, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2019; Smith, 1988, 2005). For this reason, the study explores the broader context of women's career experiences within the institution (RQ1) to help frame research into notions about prestige (RQ2) and impact of professional recognition (RQ3).

The three research questions for this thesis are as follows:

RQ1: What can we learn from the career journeys of mid-career women who champion teaching in higher education?

RQ2: What prestige, if any, do mid-career women associate with senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

RQ3: How do mid-career women articulate the impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

1.4.4 Research methods

The study takes a feminist, interpretivist, case study approach which is rooted in standpoint theory (Harding, 2004; Smith, 1988, 2005) by creating space for the lesser-heard voices of women who champion teaching and learning in HE. It also relies on insider research (Acker, 2000; Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Greene, 2014; Mercer, 2007), which fits with feminist research methods and standpoint theory and is a natural choice where the research questions arise from the institutional context. In alignment with these approaches, visual and narrative research methods were chosen to allow the fifteen women participants to recount their lived experiences in their own words. Common features of narrative research

identified by Elliott (2005) highlight the suitability of narrative interviews as a research tool within a feminist research context, for example to empower participants to choose *how* to tell their story. The interviews were complemented by visual methods which also enable research participants to take an active rather than passive role in the research (Riessman, 2008). Inspired by and adapted from the use of conceptual career maps used in a study about mid-career women and the prestige economy (Kandiko Howson et al., 2018), and by "rivers of life" and "leadership rivers" used in other educational research (Burnard, 2000; Burns, 2000; Stevenson, 2013), participants were invited to draw career journey maps representing past, present and future career elements. The maps provided a reflective focus for participants before and during the interviews and additional insights for me as researcher during data gathering and analysis. Full details about the research design, approaches and methods for the study are provided in Chapter 3.

1.4.5 Contribution to new knowledge

As the literature review in Chapter 2 will highlight, much existing research into the gender gap in HE has focussed on women in senior leadership or women aspiring to senior leadership roles (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006, 2010; Fitzgerald, 2014) and, to some extent, on women who are early career researchers (Bourabain, 2021; Caretta et al., 2018; Cole & Gunter, 2010). This thesis complements existing literature by shifting focus away from women in senior leadership or early career roles in HE to focus instead on the lesser-heard voices of mid-career women (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016).

The thesis also slightly departs from other studies about career progression by focusing beyond traditional academics to include those in teaching-only roles and those in professional services who teach and/or support learning. This broader focus reflects the changing nature of academic careers in HE which has seen a fragmenting of the traditional academic role, an increase in teaching-only contracts (Locke, 2014; Locke et al., 2016) and the emergence of *third space* professionals, which describes those who are positioned somewhere between the academic and professional/administrative domains, such as academic developers and learning technologists (McIntosh & Nutt, 2022; Whitchurch, 2012).

The research is also new through its treatment of the prestige economy, which so far has been explored in the literature in two ways. It has been used to explain academic motivation, by demonstrating that research-related achievements carry academic capital in HE which can be accrued and which can hasten promotion (Blackmore, 2016a; Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011a, 2012). It has also been explored through a gendered lens to help explain the gender gap in HE (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018). This thesis builds on existing research into the prestige economy to explore the career experiences of women in HE who champion teaching and learning. In doing so, the prestige economy is viewed in this thesis through a gendered *and* teaching lens.

A fourth aspect is that the research is contributing to a new and emerging body of literature in the field of professional recognition and teaching awards. There has been some research evaluating the impact of HEA Fellowships (for example, Botham, 2018; Cathcart et al., 2021; Peat, 2014, 2015; Pilkington, 2018; Shaw, 2018; Spowart et al., 2016, 2019, 2020; Thornton, 2014; Turner et al., 2013; van der Sluis et al., 2016, 2017), and teaching awards such as the NTF Scheme (NTFS) (for example, Austen et al., 2018; T. Brown, 2011; Chism, 2006; Frame et al., 2006; Halse et al., 2007; Quinsee & Jones-Devitt, 2018; Rickinson et al., 2012; Rolfe, 2018; Skelton, 2004; Warnes, 2021). However, to date professional recognition and awards for teaching are under-researched in relation to gender and so this thesis is examining a previously unexplored sphere which is important given the high proportion of women in HE who hold teaching intensive roles.

1.4.6 Why this research matters

Further to addressing gaps in the literature as outlined above, this research is important because it tackles a problem which is not always acknowledged. Women students now outnumber men in UK universities at 56% (Hewitt, 2020) and women make up the majority of staff in universities (Section 1.3.1). Ironically, the high number of women now studying and working in academia has created an illusion of equality in HE, with references to the "feminisation" of HE (Leathwood et al., 2009) even resulting in a "discourse of indignance" amongst male academics about perceived advantages for women (Fisher & Kinsey, 2014, p. 45). The "leadership pipeline" metaphor is based on assumptions that higher numbers of female students entering HE will result in more women taking up academic positions and

therefore, inevitably, more women leaders rising to the top (White, 2005). Section 2.5.4 of the literature review in Chapter 2 will show how scathingly the pipeline metaphor is dismissed by those who conduct research into the gender gap, whilst the literature review in general unpacks why assumptions about the pipeline are overly optimistic.

Gender inequity in HE is part of a wider problem in society and is counter to assumptions that gender equality has been achieved (Duffy et al., 2021). At the time of writing this thesis, hard-earned progress achieved by the feminist movement appears fragile (Fawcett Society, 2020a, 2020b). The COVID-19 pandemic provides an example context: government failure to consider gender in its COVID-19 response (Wenham & Herten-Crabb, 2021), outdated depictions of women in the "Stay Home. Save Lives" government advice leaflet (BBC, 2021) and the disproportionately negative impact of the pandemic on women (Fawcett Society, 2020b) including on women academics during lockdown (Smith & Watchorn, 2020) and the rise in domestic abuse reports (ONS, 2020) are a reminder of how persistent gender inequality is. The latest Women Count Report (The Pipeline, 2021) predicts that gender parity for executive committees has been delayed four more years to 2036 due to COVID-19, and gender diversity is still a significant problem. It is important not to be complacent: "beneath the surface of the climate of equality still lie major divergences of gendered power" (Bradley, 2013, p. 8). Agencies such as the Government Equalities Office, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Fawcett Society and Advance HE's Equality Challenge Unit formally monitor the status and progress of women and their work is, still, vital. As a complement to their work, we additionally need to listen to, and understand, the real voices of women in the workplace.

Finally, this research matters because evidence suggests that institutions which achieve gender equality are more likely to thrive and to be sustainable and will result in a more diverse, effective and healthier world (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Oakley, 2002; Woetzel et al., 2015). In addition to gender equality as a moral imperative, research shows that it makes good business sense: organisations limit their capacity for success by not hiring, retaining or promoting well-educated and well-qualified gender diverse executive leadership teams (McKinsey, 2017a; Petersen Institute for International Economics, 2016; Woetzel et al., 2015; World Economic Forum, 2017). Put simply, companies with a diversity of leadership

styles and with women on executive committees are found to financially outperform companies with no women at the top (McKinsey, 2017a; 2017b; Turner, 2012).

Similarly, Jarboe (2016; 2018) and Manfredi et al., (2014) argue that gender diversity in HE leadership will result in success for the sector. As Morley (2013, p.3) says, the leadership gap reflects "missed opportunities for women to contribute to the future development of universities. There is a business case – skills and talent wastage – and also a social justice case – exclusionary structures, processes and practices". Beyond the business and moral case, it is also about knowledge production. Universities play a critical role in developing new knowledge, tackling real world problems, and educating our future leaders; there is thus an irony to university executive leadership teams being so stubbornly male: "how they lead and perform on this issue matters very much given the pivotal role they play" (Jarboe, 2016, p.5). In today's globally and intensely competitive HE sector and following the damaging financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding more about women's careers in HE and how to "build the pipeline" (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014; Kellerman & Rhode, 2014; Shepherd, 2017; White, 2005) is therefore an important area for research to which this thesis contributes.

1.5   Further contextual information

1.5.1 Senior categories of teaching fellowships

This thesis explores the prestige associated with, and impact of, senior categories of HEA Fellowships and teaching fellowships for mid-career women who are teaching champions in a research-intensive institution. Four categories of professional recognition are considered in this study: HEA Senior Fellowship (SFHEA), HEA Principal Fellowship (PFHEA), University Teaching Fellowship (UTF) and National Teaching Fellowship (NTF). These are briefly defined below and explored further in the literature review in Chapter 2.

The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in HE (Advance HE, 2011) incorporates four Descriptors: Associate, Fellow, Senior and Principal Fellow categories of fellowship (UKPSF, 2011); it is the latter two which are included in this research. Senior Fellowship enables those who are leading and influencing others in their

role to achieve recognition for their achievements. Principal Fellowship is focused more on the level of strategic leadership such as shaping teaching and learning policy and practice. The application process is criterion-based rather than competitive.

As with the UKPSF and HEA Fellowships, the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) is managed on behalf of the sector by Advance HE and is open to all providers in the UK. The scheme aims to recognise and celebrate outstanding individuals whose work positively impacts the student learning experience, but also to provide a national spotlight for the institutions supporting their work, to develop a national community of teaching champions and to raise the profile of teaching and learning more broadly (Advance HE, 2021). As with SFHEA and PFHEA it is a title for life, but unlike HEA Fellowships, the application process is competitive; only approximately fifty NTF titles are awarded across the sector each year. It is thus considered a highly coveted award and many institutions provide mentoring to support individuals to make a successful application.

The University Teaching Fellowship Scheme (UTFS) is specific to the institution in this study; however, many institutions in the sector provide similar schemes. It is for individuals who demonstrate individual excellence and significantly contribute to enhancing teaching and learning at the institution, awarded to a small number of staff each year, usually between three to five, who gain the title of UTF for life. Like NTF, it is a competitive process and thus a valued award. Successful applicants become members of the UTF Community of Practice and are encouraged to play an active role in supporting teaching initiatives across the institution. For some successful applicants the UTFS provides a stepping-stone towards an application for NTF.

1.5.2 The institutional context

The institution providing the site for the study is a research-intensive university in England which also prides itself on providing high-quality teaching. The HE gender gap outlined in Section 1.3.1 is reflected in the university concerned, which has shown poor representation of women at the most senior levels; at the time of writing this thesis there are two women in (shared) Pro-Vice Chancellor roles. Figures published by the institution for 2020 report a mean gender pay gap of 20.6% which is higher than 18.3% in 2019 and higher than the UK

average for universities of 17.7% (Hewitt, 2020; UCEA, 2020). Current data for the institution show that the female to male proportion of Associate Professors (equivalent to Senior Lecturer) is approximately equal; the pool from which Professors can be selected is therefore balanced in terms of gender. However, at Professorial level a wide gap is revealed with only 36.3% female Professors in 2020. Furthermore, 56% of staff on teaching only contracts are female, and 63.8% of those on Teaching Fellow contracts (which have until very recently been a lower grade than lecturer) are female, but approximately two thirds of the institution's University Teaching Fellowships and National Teaching Fellowships, and two thirds of Senior and Principal Fellowships are held by women. Advance HE hold a database of National and HEA Fellowships but do not monitor data about gender and so sector comparisons here are not possible.

The university is, now, tackling its gender gap alongside issues such as ethnicity, and the executive leadership team has set in place a strong vision and clear policies for supporting Diversity and Inclusion. This includes setting targets for Diversity and Inclusion, specifically on gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation, which are reviewed and reported on annually. These initiatives are worthwhile and important; however, the incremental and slow progress reported each year highlights how challenging it is to effect change. Further information about the institutional context is provided in Chapter 3 about methods, Section 3.3.2.

1.5.3 Researcher background

I work in the institution which is the site of the study and my professional role as an academic developer (Leibowitz, 2014; Linder & Felten, 2015) is to encourage and promote teaching quality, to teach and support others to care about teaching and help them develop as teachers; I am also an Accreditor for Advance HE. My professional context is therefore inextricably linked to my research. I am an HEA Senior Fellow, and during this research journey I applied for and was awarded a University Teaching Fellowship, so I also walk in the shoes of my research participants. I am thus firmly in the role of an *insider researcher* (Sikes & Potts, 2008) in carrying out this research and acknowledge that the study is both shaped and potentially limited by my perspective as a white, female, university-educated, insider researcher.

My aim is to draw on my professional experience and my role as insider researcher as a strength rather than a limitation for this study (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Fleming, 2018; Greene, 2014). My position provides me with an overview of developments in teaching and learning and exposes me to conversations with colleagues at institutional and sector level about the themes addressed in this research. These insights give me confidence that, although the study is focused on one institutional context, the findings are relevant more widely. I reflect in further detail about doing insider research regarding positionality and reflexivity in Chapter 3.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This chapter has provided an introduction to the thesis overall. Organisation of the thesis is arranged in the following chapters: Chapter 2 provides a literature review, defining key terms and exploring key literature related to the research themes. Chapter 3 explains the research paradigm, framework and methods, providing a rationale for the narrative and visual methods chosen and full details about the process. Chapter 4 provides a short overview of the following three chapters about findings. Chapter 5 presents the findings for RQ1 about participants' career journeys and experiences which helps to frame the findings for RQ2 and RQ3. Chapter 6 presents the findings for RQ2 about prestige associated with senior categories of teaching fellowships. Chapter 7 presents the findings for RQ3 about the impact of achieving a senior category of teaching fellowship, including about prestige factors. Chapter 8 provides a more detailed discussion and interpretation of the findings for each of the research questions, reflecting on their connection to relevant theory and research including that presented in the literature review in Chapter 2. Chapter 9 provides a short summary of the study; it considers the study's original contribution to knowledge and then presents some limitations of the study followed by implications and recommendations for policy and practice, and finally, presents some recommendations for future research.

A glossary of abbreviations used in this thesis is provided on page 10.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As outlined in the introductory chapter, this research explores prestige associated with senior categories of teaching fellowships in the context of a persistent gender gap in HE. This chapter presents a thematic review of the literature relating to the study, exploring some of the key concepts, theories and research informing the study relating to gender, women's careers, the prestige economy and professional recognition. In doing so it provides an overview of what research shows us about the barriers and opportunities faced by women in HE and situates the study within a broader framework of feminist research.

2.2 Gender asbestos

Gender was introduced in Chapter 1 as an underpinning concept for this study. For centuries women have been socialised to display feminine characteristics and adopt feminine roles in society, whilst men have been socialised to develop masculine mannerisms and roles (Ely & Padavic, 2007). The significance of this is that masculinity is hierarchically presented in society as the dominant gender category over femininity, enabling, as a result, a continuous cycle of inequality between the two (Debebe et al., 2016; R. Ely & Padavic, 2007). It is why gender is consistently examined in relation to power, sexuality, relationships, and labour, and is why our attitudes to gender, which are deep-rooted, shape the way in which individuals, institutions and society behave, particularly in terms of power dynamics (Acker, 1990; Bradley, 2013; Connell, 2011; Connell & Pearse, 2015). It is also why gender remains a central theme throughout this thesis and why it is relevant to provide an overview of the way in which gender is theorised in the literature.

In general terms, sex is often taken to be the biological category of being either male or female, usually assigned at birth, and based on anatomy, hormones and physiology. Gender, on the other hand, is considered to have a constructed status, which is behavioural rather than biological (Bradley, 2013) although this distinction is now also being challenged (Butler, 1990, 2004; Joyce, 2021; Stock, 2021). There is a consensus in the recent literature about gender that it is complex, and difficult to define (Bradley, 2013; Colebrook, 2004; Connell &

Pearse, 2015; Glover & Kaplan, 2000). Gender is often described as multi-dimensional: "it is not just about identity, or just about work, or just about power, or just about sexuality, but about all of these things at once" (Connell & Pearce, 2015, p.12). Regarding gender as culture-specific and as politically and socially constructed (Bradley, 2013; Butler, 1990; Colebrook, 2004; Connell & Pearse, 2015; Walby, 1997) is also why understanding about gender is continually evolving. As Connell and Pearce (2015, p. 32) explain: "we are talking about relationships, boundaries, practices, identities and images that are actively created in social processes". Bradley's (2013, p.1) summary of gender provides a useful working definition for this study:

> Gender refers to the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organisation of reproduction, the sexual divisions of labour and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity.

Although in the global north we are moving towards more fluid interpretations of gender, this is a recent development and binary considerations of gender can be traced a long way back in history. Bourdieu (2001) and Colebrook (2004) highlight that there has always been a tendency for cultures to understand the world through opposing representations of femaleness and maleness. Connell and Pearce (2015) pinpoint key historical developments which encourage a gender division and justify male authority. These include a tradition of misogyny inherited via writings from the ancient world and Medieval Christianity, and later, during the era of colonization and empire, and led by male intellectuals, a period where Darwinism (as opposed to Darwin's theories) was used to propagate concepts of biological difference to justify ideas about racial and social superiority and inferiority (Connell & Pearce, 2015).

Despite male philosophers and sociologists dominating the debate about gender in the past, women intellectuals did contribute to and raise questions about gender and equality. Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is credited with being one of the first pieces of feminist writing, calling for women's right to the same educational opportunities as men. Vaerting, in *The Dominant Sex* (1923), developed an early theory of gender, challenging notions of fixed masculinity and femininity and highlighting the interplay

between gender domination and power. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* (1949/2011), challenged established notions of masculine and feminine, where men are represented as the default and women as "Other" and thus subordinate. Her now famous pronouncement "one is not born, one becomes a woman" places her as an early advocate for gender as socially constructed.

Gender as a current field of academic research builds on foundations established during second wave feminism in the 1970s and 1980s (Bradley, 2013). Inspired by ground-breaking texts such as Friedan's The Feminist Mystique (2010) in 1963, the emergence of gender as an academic field per se was a response by feminist academics to address the overly male dominated academic disciplines and the absence of women's voice within them (see Smith's "ruling texts", 1990a). Oakley's seminal work, Sex, Gender and Society (1972/1985a) drew on work by Stoller (1968) to distinguish between sex and gender, and to suggest that men and women were not totally separate, and that their differences are influenced by society. Oakley echoes de Beauvoir's references to women as "other" by describing women as aliens and outsiders in a system in which men own the power. It was writers such as Oakley, along with other early feminist writers such as Millet (1970) and Rubin (1975) who made a connection between gender and inequality for women, leading to a theory of patriarchy (Bradley, 1989/1997; Walby, 1990), which describes and explains systems of male dominance in society. Marxist ideas about capitalism, class exploitation and oppression provided a lens through which feminists could theorise about gender and patriarchy (Barrett, 1988; Beechey, 1979; Hartmann, 1979/2010). The link between gender and patriarchy and associations with inequality and oppression is why gender is a politically charged term and is inextricably linked with power (Bradley, 2013; Connell, 2011, Connell & Pearce, 2015; Oakley, 2002).

The complexity of gender is further expressed in terms of it being everywhere and embedded. The all-embracing centrality of gender is expressed by Beck (1992) as "omni-present", whilst gender is expressed by Bradley (2013) as operating on a macro (societal), meso (institutional) and micro (individual) level, all of which are relevant to this thesis. For Acker (1990) and Bradley (2013), all our institutions are gendered, and are places in which the gendering of people and relationships occurs. Acker's (1990) seminal text on the

gendered nature of work structures refers to power being "located in all-male enclaves at the pinnacle of large state and economic organisations" (p.139). Bradley's (2013) theory of gendering at the meso (institutional) level builds on Acker's work in highlighting the all-pervasive nature of male power in work structures. Similarly, Wittenberg-Cox (2013) refers to "gender asbestos" (p.110) to describe the difficulty of eradicating "a masculine mould" (p.108) which is embedded into the fabric of organisations. As will be seen in Section 2.4, this is also the case for the HE sector, which is described in research as having an entrenched masculinised culture (Savigny, 2014, 2019).

For gender scholars such as Walby (Verloo & Walby, 2012; Walby et al., 2012) and hooks (1981/2015a, 1984/2015b) the centrality of gender is expressed through a theory of intersectionality. This provides a framework through which to study systems of power and oppression in relation to the identity of marginalised and oppressed groups, with an emphasis on the interrelationship between different elements. Although intersectionality was originally advocated by black feminists, especially in response to a predominantly white, middle-class feminist movement (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1981/2015a; 1984/2015b), it has been adopted more widely as a helpful approach when exploring issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism and classism. An intersectional approach aligns with views of gender as complex, all-embracing, deeply cultural and socially and politically constructed. By advocating that these issues should not be studied in isolation and systems do not operate independently, because "we do not live single-issue lives" (Lorde, 2007, pp. 131–132) an intersectional approach aligns with postmodernist thinking. Regarding our approach to gender research, Walby (2005, 2010; 2014) also promotes the need for *gender mainstreaming*, which is a more open acknowledgement of the gendered world we inhabit, incorporating more responsible approaches to social research, policy and decision making to reflect such complexity and intersectionality.

Postmodernity (Hutcheon, 2002; McRobbie, 1994; Woods, 1999) has challenged traditional assumptions about gender more radically than before, not least in acknowledging the importance of *context* in relation to gender. Postmodernists reject a systems theory approach to the study of gender and power relations centred on capitalism or patriarchy as too restrictive and because it fails to reflect the dynamic and diverse nature of lived

relationships and the importance of context. Examples of seminal and provocative work challenging our understanding about gender include West and Zimmerman (1987) in their article "Doing Gender" which built on work by Goffman (1979) to emphasise the external nature of gender, presenting gender as a performance, and Butler's powerful work entitled "Gender Trouble" (1990). Butler challenged the notion that sex is not changeable, warning that *gender performativity* is likely to be a reinforcement of established gender norms shaped by heterosexual normativity. These accounts are helpful in illustrating how our "performances" are informed by deeply rooted cultural understandings about gender (see also Dworkin, in Bordo (1993)), and underpin the emergence of terms such as genderfluid, genderflux and gender-diverse (Hines & Taylor, 2018).

Related to this, research is helping us to understand that long established and accepted gender stereotypes – male versus female, strong and protective versus caring and nurturing, agentic versus communal (Caleo & Heilman, 2013) and so on – are precisely that: *stereotypes,* with writers such as Connell (2011) and Fine (2010) dismantling the gender binary as a myth*.* Fine (2010), for example, highlights the pervasive impact of gender through countless examples from research about our conscious and unconscious gender bias in the workplace. More fluid interpretations of sexual identity in some global north societies, including in the UK, are resulting in greater acceptance of those who do not conform to traditional notions of binary gender identities and this is being increasingly reflected in policy and workplace practices and social media (Cammaerts, 2015). There is an emerging vocabulary to help us express our widening understanding about diverse sexualities and gender identities, illustrated by Stonewall's extensive online glossary (Stonewall, 2021).

These developments champion equality and respectful treatment towards everyone, so it is ironic that recently there has been toxic debate between campaigners for the rights of trans people and gender critical feminists which divides feminism as a movement over the issue of gender identity theory (see, for example, Adams, 2021). Gender critical feminism argues that biological sex *is* fixed and should not be conflated with self-declared gender identity; female anatomy shapes female differences from males, including what makes women vulnerable (Joyce, 2021; Rustin, 2020; Stock, 2021). For gender critical feminists, the implications of encoding the right to self-declare gender identity within law needs careful consideration

regarding consequences which might inadvertently be harmful to women. An example often cited is whether the use of gender-neutral language to promote inclusivity is reductive and even erases women (Caruso, 2021; DiManno, 2021; Joyce, 2021).

2.3   A climate of equality

As outlined in the previous section, the second wave feminist movement saw an explosion in feminist research and campaigning on both sides of the Atlantic (Barrett, 1988; Beechey, 1979; Harding, 1986; Hartmann, 1979/2010; hooks, 1981/2015a, 1984/2015b). A key milestone in the campaign for equality in the UK was the Equal Pay Act in 1970, followed by the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, both of which were replaced by the Equality Act 2010. It is now better understood that *equality*, in the form of everyone being treated the same, may be the end goal, but *equity*, in the form of everyone having access to the same starting points, is required first of all (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019). Rather than the dreamed of utopia achieved through "full employment, educational opportunity, social welfare and occupational mobility" (Halsey, et al., 1997, p.2), this period of expansion in the second half of the twentieth century created *some* room for women, including those from working class backgrounds, but mostly, "the reproduction of privilege remained" (p.5). This "reproduction of privilege" within institutions, and in relation to career progression, re-expressed through the concept of academic prestige, is a key theme within this study.

The advent of third wave feminism in the 1990s diverted attention away from women and employment to a critique of approaches to a white, middle class, liberal feminist movement. In line with postmodernist attention to intersectionality, third wave feminism embraced diversity to include working class, black and lesbian feminist voices, researching new topics such as race theory (Hill Collins, 2009; hooks, 1984/2015b), queer theory (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1994) and masculinity (Beasley, 2005; Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2010). Many women had moved from working in the "pink collar ghettoes" (Mastracci, 2015) of secretarial work, nursing and teaching to achieve professional careers in law, medicine, finance, business and academia (Bradley, 1999). The media referred to a "genderquake" in employment to reflect claims about a shift in power between women and men, increased competition for the top jobs and a crisis of masculinity (Bradley, 1999; Wilson, 1999).

Antifeminists, post-postmodernists and the media asked whether the old battles for equality had in fact been fought and won, with references to us now inhabiting a "post-feminist era" (Anderson, 2014; Gamble, 2001; McRobbie, 1994) in which a climate of equality, thanks to decades of antidiscrimination and equal opportunity policy, is now finally, perhaps, embedded within our organisations.

The extent of the gender pay imbalances reported in recent years and lack of progress in addressing them (Fawcett Society, 2018, 2020a, 2020b; IFS, 2021; ONS, 2020) reveal how successfully a "climate of equality" (Bradley, 2013, p.124) has smoothed over the cracks of inequality. Fine (2010) too, warns that this illusion, packaged by those on the political right, is misleading and Anderson (2014, p.xii), likewise, argues that sexism and discrimination "are now packaged in a more palatable but stealthy form". The damaging impact of a climate of secrecy and abuse of power was also revealed via the #MeToo movement in 2017, tackling sexual harassment and assault, and the 2018 launch of the Time's Up campaign, tackling sexual harassment in the workplace. Both are evidence of a global, digitally driven and more inclusive fourth wave feminist movement in which a key aim is empowerment (Anderson, 2014), giving women a voice to call out media sexism, domestic violence, sexual assault and to demand equal pay and abortion rights (Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013). Although these developments are positive, the way in which feminist debate can still become toxic and re-framed by the media using the language of culture wars means that vital discussion can be difficult, and even silenced (Joyce, 2021; Stock, 2021; Adams, 2021). This thesis tackles a gender gap which on the surface is not always visible. Set within a UK HE institution it questions the "climate of equality" Bradley (2013); Fine, (2010), Anderson, (2014) and Fitzgerald, (2014) caution against us believing in.

2.4   The gender gap in HE

It is important to highlight that although the focus of this thesis is on the experiences of women in HE, exclusionary practices do not exclusively impact women. The concept of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 2005) highlights that a dominant form of masculinity underlies homosocial behaviour which may of course exclude both women *and* men. Within the body of research about women's careers in HE there is also acknowledgement that

women have made considerable strides and there *is* a gradual increase of women taking up executive leadership roles. As Pyke (2013, p. 446) states: "women are not 'squashed ants' under the weight of a patriarchal structure that conspires to exclude women… Women exercise considerable agency within the system".

However, despite government and sector policy promoting equality, a prevailing discourse of inclusivity in higher education and no shortage of women academics, the gender gap in HE in the UK is, still, reflected in both leadership and salary terms and is far more serious when gender intersects with other characteristics such as ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability (Hey et al., 2011; Jarboe, 2016, 2018; ONS, 2020). HEPI (Hewitt, 2020) report that, despite progress in the UK in recent years, women now comprise 55% of the total HE staff population but a mere 29% of Vice-Chancellors and only 37% of senior leadership roles. The current median gender pay gap in UK universities is 15.9% compared to the median level of 9.7% across other sectors (Hewitt, 2020). Although Jarboe's latest "Women Count" report (2018) highlights an improved picture from even two years previously (Jarboe, 2016), the warning from Kearney twenty years ago still appears to hold true, that universities have "the dubious privilege of likely remaining the most male-dominated establishments in the world in relation to career advancement" (Kearney, 2000, p.13, cited in Chesterman et al., 2005, p. 166).

The disadvantaged position of women in academia in the UK has been documented by feminist researchers for decades (Acker, 1980; Bagilhole & White, 2011; Cotterill et al., 2007; Davies et al., 1994; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006, 2010; Manfredi et al., 2014; Morley, 2013a; Morley & Walsh, 1995). This literature review draws on research from the UK *and beyond* the UK because it is an international problem (Morley, 2006, 2014), with similar findings around the world including, to name only a few examples, in Ireland (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; O'Connor, 2020), the Netherlands (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012), Spain (Castaño et al., 2019), the Middle East (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017; Jayashree et al., 2020), the United States (Longman & Madsen, 2014), Canada (Acker, 2014), Australia (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Winchester et al., 2006; Winchester & Browning, 2015), New Zealand (Fitzgerald, 2014, 2020), China (Zhao & Jones, 2017) and South Asia (Morley & Crossouard, 2016).

2.5   Women and career progression in HE

Much valuable research into the "intractable problem" (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019, p. 1) of an enduring gender gap in HE has focused on women in leadership. Research has explored the barriers encountered by women who aspire to leadership (Castaño et al., 2019; Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016a; Fitzgerald, 2014; Morley, 2014a; White, 2003), resulting in a "glass ceiling" effect (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). The literature highlights the existence of discriminatory practices including reports of bullying, marginalisation and exclusion (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Manfredi et al., 2014; Pyke, 2013). University management structures are still dominated by masculine discourses and men still occupy the majority of leadership positions (Fitzgerald, 2014) which leads to "attitudinal and organisational biases against women" (BlackChen, 2015, p. 153) including a "tacit pro-male bias in hiring" and barriers to women seeking upper-level leadership roles (p.153). Reflecting other research (Acker, 1980; Acker 1990; Bradley, 2013; BlackChen, 2015), Morley (2014, p. 121) finds that an invisible climate of "cultural and organisational norms" exists which disadvantage women.

2.5.1 Neoliberalism and a masculinised culture

The barriers to women's progression are underpinned by descriptions of the HE sector as a "male academy" (Cotterill et al., 2007) "masculinised" (Fitzgerald, 2014; Savigny, 2014), and an "academic boys' club" (Fisher & Kinsey, 2014). Although a masculinised culture has always existed in higher education, built on traditional assumptions about women being at home to support high achieving academic males, it has been exacerbated by government reforms in moving the sector towards marketisation and massification (Acker & Wagner, 2019; Bagilhole & White, 2011; Ball, 2012; Carvalho & de Lurdes Machado, 2010; Leathwood et al., 2009; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; O'Connor, 2020; White et al., 2011).

As with elsewhere in the public sector, "managerial" corporate management practices have been imported into universities "through the veins of neo-liberalism" (Lynch, 2012, p. 4) resulting in quality management, audit and inspection, strategic plans, performance management, a culture of productivity and competition and close public scrutiny of institutional performance via sector-wide league tables (Ball, 2012; Deem et al., 2007;

Fitzgerald, 2014; Hazelkorn, 2007; Lynch, 2015; Molesworth et al., 2009; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Shepherd, 2018). The masculinised, neoliberal academy can be "competitive, ruthless and single-minded" (Thomas & Davies, 2002, p. 383) and an environment in which many women struggle to compete with their male colleagues (Acker & Wagner, 2019; Bagilhole & White, 2011; Currie et al., 2000; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; O'Connor, 2020; K. White et al., 2011).

One element of the masculinised culture is an entrenched "homosocial boys' club" (Bagilhole, 2007; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Harley, 2003; Morley & Walsh, 1995) which Diezmann and Grieshaber (2019, p.140) describe as "an example of traditional and inherited gendered power structures". Similarly, Savigny (2014, p.797) refers to "cultural sexism" in academia which she describes as "an everyday, *ordinary,* occurrence which takes place within masculinised hegemonic structures". The title of Acker's influential paper "Women, the other academics" (1980) points to de Beauvoir's (1949) reference to woman as "other" and reflects the exclusion from the club experienced by women. The phrase "boys' club" is equivalent to an "old boys' network" and captures the male discourses and practices which are part of the academy, but which are largely invisible and which assume "the banality of the understated norm, which does not require comment or explanation. Its very invisibility illustrates its privilege" (Fisher & Kinsey, 2014, p.46). Men, in academia, are "the gatekeepers" and women report not knowing the rules which operate to isolate them (Fitzgerald, 2014, p.21). Fisher and Kinsey (2014) refer to "informalism" to explain the informal networks of male bonding and complicit support that exclude women in higher education. For many men this can appear harmless, but it is about power and exclusion with the impact being apparent on promotion boards, in "male, pale and stale" leadership teams and in the gender pay gap. Reflecting Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisations and Wittenberg-Cox's use of the term "gender asbestos" (2013, p.110); Diezmann and Grieshaber (2019, p.138) say of the boys' club that "what has been called a Club seems to have entrenched itself as a culture".

Beyond the gender pay gap, a masculinised culture is evident in the gendered division of academic labour within the sector (Bagilhole & White, 2011; Morley, 2013a), leading to a well-documented gender divide between "macho" prestigious research and external facing

roles versus "feminised" teaching and pastoral support roles (Carvalho & de Lurdes Machado, 2010; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016a; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Morley, 2014; Thomas & Davies, 2002). The result is both horizontal and vertical segregation, where high status research endeavour is rewarded by promotion boards whilst the long hours associated with undergraduate teaching, marking and support is undervalued, less visible, and less rewarded. Deem (2001) views women as an exploitable resource in "greedy" managerial regimes. Women, in other words, are often assigned "care-giving roles" (Ramsay, 2007) and a parallel can be drawn between the tiring emotion work required by those with a heavy teaching and pastoral support remit and the emotional labour Hochschild (2003) identifies as often falling to women in the workplace.

2.5.2 Greedy institutions

A further challenge for many women is that they still carry the burden of caring responsibilities and domestic labour in the home. Hochschild and Machung (2012) refer to a "second shift" for women, also referred to as women's "double-day" (Lahiri-Dutt & Sil, 2014) or the "double-burden" (Cotterill et al., 2007). Researchers highlight the sacrifices women academics with childcare and other caring responsibilities often make, such as having less time to spend on research, despite this being the activity most likely to lead to promotion (Huppatz et al., 2018; Mason et al., 2013; Misra et al., 2012; Ramsay, 2007). Morley (2014, p.121) warns that "universities were not designed to correspond to timetables of motherhood" and Morley (2013a, p. 7), drawing on work by Coser (1974) and Acker (1980), refers to women academics being torn between "two greedy institutions – the extended family and the university". Research highlights the extent to which women struggle with this double burden and the cost involved (Coate et al., 2015; Loumansky et al., 2007; Ramsay, 2007; Thomas & Davies, 2002). Doherty and Manfredi (2010, p.147) found evidence of women trying to achieve too much in demanding institutions feeling "tired and battle-weary" and "inadequate" when they failed.

2.5.3 Leadership stereotypes

Women can also be constrained by stereotypical notions of leadership being viewed as an inherently male endeavour (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Wilkinson & Blackmore, 2008) leading to

women being seen as "risky" choices for executive leadership (Ibarra et al., 2010) and male leaders unintentionally appointing others who look like them, referred to as "cloning" (Gronn & Lacey, 2006). Gender stereotypes can be both *descriptive*, stating what we are like, and *prescriptive*, stating what we should be like, according to normative expectations (Caleo & Heilman, 2013; Heilman, 2012). These false dichotomies mean that women who seek leadership roles can face a "double-bind" whereby they are "damned if they do and doomed if they don't" conform to stereotype (Catalyst, 2007, p. 1). Similarly, Glick and Fiske (2007) refer to "benevolent sexism" towards women who fit a feminine stereotype and "hostile sexism" to women who do not.

Elsewhere research points to stereotypes being beneficial for women, where HE organisations positively value the perceived feminine qualities of women as providing a helpful balance within the institution, believing women are more likely to draw on "soft skills", value equality and adopt reflective, evaluative and transformational styles of leadership (Carvalho & de Lurdes Machado, 2010; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Ramsay & Letherby, 2006; Saunderson, 2002) particularly as a counter to the hard-edged, competitive culture of neoliberal managerialism (White et al., 2011). Some research indicates that women show great potential as senior leaders precisely because they do *not* fit traditional male dominated patterns of management and therefore might challenge and even change existing structures (White et al., 2011).

Characteristics of women's leadership and leadership factors are explored extensively in the literature, including different motivations at work (Billing & Alvesson, 2014; BlackChen, 2015; Dean et al., 2009; Fitzgerald, 2014; Longman & Madsen, 2014; Morley, 2013a). Traditional, hierarchical and male-dominated structures "based on dominance and material superiority" (Rey, 2005, p. 10) may not provide an environment in which women can thrive, but in our digitally networked, global, less formal world, new models of leadership are emerging. Organisations are increasingly valuing community, sustainability, equality and diversity, which are thought to align with collective and distributed approaches to leadership characteristically associated with women who often seem to value team-oriented cultures (Rey, 2005; Wittenberg-Cox, 2013). In HE, this is reflected in the creation of new roles such

as Dean for Diversity and in attention paid to authentic and transformational leadership approaches within leadership development programmes for women.

2.5.4 The leadership pipeline

Research also explores lessons learned from women who are *in* leadership positions (Acker, 2012; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Dunn et al., 2014; Fitzgerald, 2020; Manfredi et al., 2014; Shepherd, 2017) such as the benefits of flexible work practices and mentoring. Perhaps because many women lack role models and sometimes confidence, mentoring has been found to be especially helpful (Bynum, 2015; de Vries, 2011; de Vries et al., 2006; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2010; Searby et al., 2015) although Ibarra et al., (2010) distinguish between mentoring and more targeted *sponsorship*, finding the latter is more beneficial. Researching lessons learned is considered helpful towards feeding the "leadership pipeline", and even stemming the "leaky pipeline" (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014) of talented women leaving HE or abandoning leadership aspirations. The pipeline metaphor is built on the assumption that the more women there are in the system, the more will eventually rise to the top (White, 2005). Based on systemic gender bias and inequalities within the sector, Kellerman and Rhode (2014, 2017) question this wisdom, believing that "the pipeline has become a pipe dream" (2014, p.24). Similarly, Fitzgerald (2014, p.26) unpacks this misconception as a "myth of opportunity", also referring to gender equality as "a mirage" (Fitzgerald & Wilkinson, 2010 cited in Fitzgerald, 2014, p.26). The pipeline metaphor complements other metaphorical references in research: to an academic "glass ceiling" representing barriers to top level progression (Cook, 2010; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009) and an academic "glass cliff" for women being appointed to leadership roles with a high chance of failure (Peterson, 2014; Ryan & Haslam, 2007).

2.5.5 Values

Neoliberalism is often blamed for an erosion of traditional academic values in HE, such as truth, evidence, self-criticality and honesty (Ball, 2012; Harland & Pickering, 2011; Macfarlane, 2011) with warnings that neoliberal management practices, and the huge efforts required to survive in a highly competitive market, risk compromising moral integrity within HE practice. Universities are attempting to remain relevant and sustainable in an age

of intense complexity (Barnett, 2008), but traditional, liberal academic values may no longer fit. The relevance of this point is that women may operate most effectively when their practice is aligned to their personal values. For example, recent research points to women tending to value authenticity, self-fulfillment and "a desire to do things really well" over senior leadership aspirations per se (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019, p.107), expressed by women in Vongalis-Macrow's study (2016) as "adding value". In an international study, Morley (2014, p.114) asks whether women are "desiring, dismissing or being disqualified" from senior leadership roles in the global academy. In relation to the prestige economy, Coate et al., (2015) found that women were less motivated by the same indicators of prestige and reward as their male colleagues, being drawn to other, lower-status, aspects of academic work such as group research projects, mentoring colleagues and teaching – the type of work which may reduce their chances of upwards progression. Many of the women in their study were motivated by academic values such as a love of science, collegiality, building collective success and making a useful contribution to society but believed such values were often at odds with the "'game playing' [required] to meet key performance indicators (KPIs) set by the institution" (2015, p.23). Similarly, O'Neil et al., (2013, p.89) cite research which finds that success for women is not only about hierarchical career progression and larger salaries, but also about engaging in meaningful work, "demonstrating the importance of holism in women's careers".

2.5.6 Mid-career women in HE

A development in the literature, and reflected in this thesis, is that greater attention is now being paid to women in mid-career leadership roles in HE rather than focusing on the few women who are promoted to "the top" (Acker, 2014; Coate et al., 2015; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). The term mid-career is wide-ranging, encompassing those who are beyond the early stage of their career but not yet at the retirement stage. It is also taken in this thesis to include those who are already high achieving (Gersick & Kram, 2002) and may hold leadership and management roles, but excludes those in executive management positions such as Dean, Pro-Vice Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor. The space mid-career women occupy has been described as the "ivory basements" (Eveline, 2004), or "velvet ghettos" (Guillaume & Pochic, 2007) to symbolise the invisible barriers to senior-level

promotion but to also reflect the less prestigious roles women often take on in teaching, communication, finance and human resource management compared to higher status and more rewarding roles secured by male colleagues.

Due to a focus on early-career researchers and senior leaders, women in mid-career tend to be overlooked and yet it is especially important for women during this phase to receive career support (Coate et al., 2015). It can be a long and arduous period for many career women requiring flexibility and resilience (Coate et al., 2015, Gersick and Kram, 2002; Vongalis-Macrow, 2015) and for many women the mid-career level is as far as they will reach (Vongalis-Macrow, 2015). Some may be caring for children or elderly relatives and questioning whether they wish to stay in academia (Coate et al., 2015). O'Neil et al., looking across sectors, categorise women's careers into three distinct stages, sprinters, marathoners and relay runners, to reflect the enthusiasm of early career women, the endurance required to juggle multiple commitments and to cope with the long haul of the mid-career phase, and the reinvention and reconnection that can come from experience and confidence during the later phase. Drawing on Levinson's model of development (1996) Gersick and Kram (2002, p.104) find similar patterns to O'Neil et al.; they refer to women finding a life role in their twenties, negotiating career and family "trade-offs" in their thirties and "coming into their own" at fifty and beyond.

We tend to think about career progression in terms of an upwards trajectory, but understandings about career paths and progression have been established for, and by, men, which have been traditionally linear (Gersick & Kram, 2002). Women are sometimes described as having "kaleidoscope" careers (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), "frayed" or "patchwork" careers (Sabelis & Schilling, 2013) to reflect the broken pattern of progression upwards in organisations incorporating career breaks, for example due to childbirth and other caring responsibilities. Related to this, Coate et al., (2015), Diezmann and Grieshaber (2019), and Doherty and Manfredi (2010) found evidence that women academics do not strategically *plan* their careers to the extent that men do. Hewlett and Luce (2005), found that almost 60 per cent of well-qualified women have non-linear careers, shaped by "push and pull factors" – push factors such as perception of limited career opportunities or lack of role models, pull factors such as caring for children or elderly parents. These factors may

help to explain why the mid-career phase can be long for many women. An important conclusion from research by Coate et al., (2015) which helps to understand the kaleidoscope metaphor, is that the mid-career stage for women in HE is "complex and fluid" (p.7) and that women "should not be pigeon-holed as being either ambitious or not, as they are very likely to change their priorities at different times, and need to be supported in their current roles as well as in their plans to develop themselves and aspire to new roles" (p.12).

2.5.7 Confidence issues and imposter syndrome

A further challenge faced by some women in HE and connected to those challenges highlighted thus far, relates to lack of confidence and even "imposter syndrome". Clance and Imes (1978) coined the phrase Imposter Phenomenon to capture the belief by individuals, often women, who believe their career success is due to luck or incredibly hard work and effort rather than ability and competence. Kets de Fries (2005, p. 2) cautions that it is not a false humility: "it is the flip side of giftedness and causes many talented, hardworking, and capable leaders— men and women who have achieved great things—to believe that they don't deserve their success".

Although it was originally associated more with women (Clance & Imes, 1978), it is now accepted that it is found in both women and men (Kets de Fries, 2005) but women appear to be especially prone to it (Kets de Vries, 2005; Young, 2011). As the abstract for Young's (2011) book states: "women are more apt to agonize over tiny mistakes, see even constructive criticism as evidence of their shortcomings, and… […] often unconsciously overcompensate with crippling perfectionism, overpreparation, maintaining a lower profile, withholding their talents and opinions". As a result, imposter syndrome continues to be a focus in studies about women and progression and in professions where one gender dominates another, such as in HE. The highly competitive nature of academic work including a "publish or perish" culture may exacerbate imposter syndrome in HE (Hutchins, 2015, p. 4) where it has been found to be common (Hutchins, 2015; Parkman, 2016) and appears to be especially experienced by women working in male dominated STEM disciplines (Blalock, 2014) and those in "untenured" positions (Hutchins, 2015). Diezmann and Grieshaber (2019) found consistent evidence of the women professors in their research attributing their successes to luck and chance rather than ability or experience.

Lack of confidence and imposter syndrome can be damaging, negatively impacting on health and well-being, leading to over-work and crippling anxiety and stress (Ket de Vries, 2005; Hutchins, 2015) which is why understanding imposter syndrome is important and may help to nurture and retain good staff (Parkman, 2016) and address the "leaky pipelines" (McKinsey, 2017b, p. 61). Blalock (2014), for example, highlighted confidence as the quality women cited most as supporting their career progression to the top whilst Hutchins' study (2015) found that mentoring can be especially helpful in alleviating imposter syndrome tendencies. Exley and Kessler (2019) also warn of the negative impact of low confidence in labour market outcomes; they identify a clear gender gap in terms of self-evaluation, with women less likely to rate themselves as positively as equally performing men. The issue of confidence and imposter syndrome has fuelled an industry of self-help texts and professional development programmes aimed at women, perpetuating a "fix the women" narrative. Texts offer advice on gaining confidence, speaking up, finding mentors, "leaning in", learning to fail, building a network of allies and so on (for example, Blalock, 2014; Kay & Shipman, 2015; Sandberg, 2013).

Low confidence levels matter in an HE environment and a prestige economy which increasingly rely on "cultures of self-promotion" (Ball, 2012; Coate et al., 2015, p.15). Lack of confidence and self-promotion by women has been identified in research (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006) and can result in risk-averse behaviour regarding decisions about progression (Diezmann & Greishaber, 2019). For women from ethnic minority backgrounds, risk-averse behaviour may be even more pronounced. Coate et al. (2015, p.14) link a reluctance by women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds to self-promote their achievements to a perceived "lack of value" given to their work (see also Scharff, 2015). The lack of value Coate et al., (2015) refer to in HE includes those feminised roles such as teaching and student support which are often held by women, and which are the focus of this research. It is also worth highlighting that HEA Senior and Principal Fellowship and University and National Teaching Fellowship awards require applicants to engage in self-promotion by explicitly articulating their individual successes and achievements in teaching excellence. Issues relating to confidence are re-visited in Section 2.8 regarding professional development programmes for women.

2.6   The prestige economy in HE

This thesis was inspired by research which explores the barriers to career progression that mid-career women experience in relation to prestige factors (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018). This section defines the prestige economy and highlights its connection with the challenges faced by women highlighted in Section 2.5, in particular, a masculinised culture.

The term "prestige economy" (English, 2005) was first used in HE to explain motivational aspects of academic work, especially academic endeavour which is not always well-rewarded in financial terms (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011a, 2011b). The prestige economy is a mix of "pursuing, creating, and sharing knowledge and being rewarded for doing so" (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011a, p. 405). "Prestige" can be interpreted to mean "esteem" and "status" and is linked to professional identity underpinned by Bourdieu's ideas of capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986, 1988), which are further explored in Section 2.7. The possession of capital for Bourdieu is linked to opportunity, with a lack of capital being a constraint and more capital being an enabler. Blackmore and Kandiko (2011a) drew on these ideas about capital to explore notions of prestige in academia, creating a model of motivation in which monetary reward, academic work and the prestige economy intersect to shape a person's academic habitus, or identity.

Academic prestige has more recently been explored through a gendered lens revealing that indicators of academic esteem may be more easily attained by male academics in a masculinised HE culture (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Morley, 2014). Here, the term "prestige economy" is defined by Coate et al., (2015, p.2) to mean "the collection of beliefs, values and behaviours that characterise and express what a group of people prizes highly". In HE the prestige economy prizes and rewards notions of expertise and scholarly standing, to be weighed against and compared with others' prestige during appointment, promotion and reward processes. Work that carries esteem includes large research grant income, high status publications, invitations to give keynotes at international conferences, editing journals and PhD supervision. In other words, precisely those aspects of academic performance which are encouraged and

promoted by a neoliberal, competitive culture which encourages performativity and attracts research funding. The decision makers who oversee research peer review panels, recruitment panels and policy making committees are predominantly male and so the status quo is perpetuated (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Morley, 2014). Coate and Kandiko Howson (2016, p.576) emphasise the relationship between the prestige economy and embedded male networks within the institution, referred to as "an institutional homosocial culture", mirroring claims elsewhere in the literature about an academic boys' club favouring those who are on the inside (Bradley, 2013; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Morley, 2014, 2013b, 2013a; Thomas & Davies, 2002).

The gendered prestige economy helps to explain the persistent gender and leadership gaps in HE, particularly as it relates to decisions about appointments and promotion: male academics more easily accrue greater prestige, which accelerates their upward career progression into leadership positions, compared to women (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko et al., 2018). An additional element relates to claims that while more men are involved in research, more women find themselves tasked with middle management, administration, course leadership roles and heavier teaching burdens (White et al., 2011), to the extent that "women's less developed research profile is the main impediment to them gaining professorial status" (Doherty & Manfredi, 2006, p.553). Crucially, aspects of academic work which have become feminised, and which are also less tangible and visible in terms of "outputs" such as undergraduate teaching, student support and administration, are undervalued in the prestige economy (Coate and Kandiko Howson, 2016; Fitzgerald, 2014; Thomas and Davies, 2002). Thomas and Davies (2002, p.385) refer to a division of academic work between a "premier league" of high-profile research and consultancy and low status day-to-day work: "women felt that they were locked into those activities which perpetuated their marginalized status in the institution". A heavier teaching load and/or caring responsibilities at home impacts upon research outputs resulting in women being less able to access the prestige factors which help them to win external funding and also impacts on women's ability to identify as researchers. Coate and Kandiko Howson (2016, p.569) find that "if women find it more difficult to acquire [prestige factors] they are likely to be disadvantaged throughout much of their careers".

2.7 Bourdieu and career capital

As outlined in Section 2.6, the concept of a prestige economy draws on Bourdieu's ideas about capital, and by exploring a gendered prestige economy this thesis overlaps with ideas about women's career capital, of which academic prestige is a part. Bourdieu (1986) identified three key forms of interconnected capital which enable individuals to manoeuvre themselves in society and to thrive: economic (financial wealth and material assets), social (beneficial social networks) and cultural (advantageous behaviours, understanding, education and qualifications) but also referred to symbolic capital with reference to reputation and power (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu's concept of capital can be explained as a resource and is dynamic in the sense that it relates to values and mobility (Skeggs, 2004) whilst the having or not having of capital is closely linked with class distinction (Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013).

Bourdieu's multifaceted notion of cultural capital has proved helpful to feminist scholars (Fowler, 1996; Lovell, 2000; McCall, 1992; McLeod, 2005; Moi, 1991; Skeggs, 1997) which makes Bourdieu even more relevant to this study in an underpinning sense. Cultural capital incorporates a physical embodiment, *habitus* – the elusive but deeply ingrained set of habits and dispositions that we carry inside ourselves, shaped by life experience and incorporating self-confidence and identity (Bourdieu, 1988). The behaviours and perceptions underpinning and shaping our inclinations towards either masculinity or femininity can also be described as a form of habitus. Bourdieu did not really explore the concept of gender capital (Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013); however, feminists have explored Bourdieu's concept of embodied capital to embrace gendered capital, particularly in relation to women and work (Huppatz, 2009; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013; Lovell, 2000; McCall, 1992; Skeggs, 2004). Although both men and women might draw on aspects of masculinity or femininity, it is stereotypical, hegemonic masculinity which counts as gender capital and is likely to be the most rewarded in society (Connell, 2005; Huppatz, 2009; Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013).

Research indicates that, just as many women find it challenging to access the prestige economy, and for many of the same reasons outlined in Sections 2.5 and 2.6, they also find it harder to accrue career capital more broadly (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Fitzsimmons &

Callan, 2016; Jayashree et al., 2020). Informed by Bourdieu's forms of capital, career capital represents the combined types of capital that are valued in a career environment (Duberley & Cohen, 2010). Career capital can be defined as "the value of competencies, knowledge and individual personality attributes you have to produce economic value" (Holowitski, 2019 para. 2). It is also defined as the combined influence of human, psychological and social capitals alongside real work experience (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016).

What these definitions of career capital also capture is the importance of *habitus* for career capital: in other words, beyond tangible attributes such as academic qualifications and work experience, how we feel inside, how we portray ourselves to the world and how we interact with others also influences our success. This is relevant to the gender gap in HE because, in addition to other challenges outlined in Section 2.5, and as outlined in Section 2.5.7, research indicates that women may be more likely to lack confidence and be less comfortable about self-promotion compared to their male colleagues. These factors: low confidence, perceptions of low career capital and barriers faced by a gendered prestige economy, might each impact on the other and contribute to a vicious cycle of disadvantage for women.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of human capital (encompassing strategy, leadership and cognitive skills), social capital (realised through networks and visibility) and cultural capital (academic qualifications, academic prestige and understanding about how one's institution works) as the most important forms of career capital for career progression, especially to executive leadership roles (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2016; Jayashree et al., 2020). Building career capital by accessing networks and gaining visibility (social capital) and having embodied understanding about how academic processes such as promotion panels operate (cultural capital) is likely to be easier for those "on the inside" and "in the know" and is why a pervasive academic boys' club in HE (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014), as outlined in Section 2.5.1, makes accruing career capital, incorporating academic prestige, harder for those who feel excluded.

2.8 Professional development programmes for women

Women only professional development programmes designed to feed the pipeline are controversial, not only by excluding men and therefore not being inclusive, but also by taking a deficit approach of "fixing the women" rather than fixing the organisational culture (Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Fletcher & Ely, 2003; Wittenberg-Cox, 2013). Despite these sensitivities, research has found that such programmes can foster lasting transformational change, for example by helping women to perceive themselves as leaders (Debebe et al., 2016; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014, 2016; Ely et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2018; White, 2003). Understanding about career capital is now reflected in professional development and leadership initiatives for women through programmes which aim to develop confidence and build human, social and cultural capital in participants, as well as developing understanding about *how* these capitals can interact and influence success. For example, it can be seen in Advance HE's Aurora programme (Advance HE, 2021) which addresses themes such as "Identity, Impact and Voice", "Politics and Influence" as well as leadership skills.

Ely et al., (2011, p.475) are critical of earlier versions of such programmes which adopted either "add-women-and-stir" or "fix-the-women" approaches. Meanwhile we are reminded by Kellerman and Rhode (2017, p.17) that providing leadership development programmes for women is a serious business: "if women and leadership […] is undertaken at all, it should be undertaken seriously and rigorously. This is not a trivial pedagogical exercise". A message emerging from research on women only development programmes is that it is important to provide these safe spaces to bring about transformational learning, and women participants find them helpful (Coate et al., 2015; Debebe et al., 2016; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014, 2016; Ely et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2018; White, 2003) but an intersectional approach is required which avoids a mechanistic "how do men do things?" approach. For example, Debebe et al., (2016) remind us that women's leadership experiences should not be examined through a gender lens alone but must allow space for women's multiple identities.

In recognition of how hard it can be for women to perceive themselves as leaders when faced with a culture which undermines their self-belief, some leadership development work for women has been re-purposed as identity work, nurturing a sense of agency in

participants to help them evolve as leaders (Ely et al., 2011; Parker, 2018) and with an emphasis on allowing them to be their authentic selves (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2016). Exploring strategic, authentic and transformational forms of leadership as opposed to traditional, hierarchical approaches is a part of this. Identity and a sense of agency are also explored in these programmes through awareness raising about imposter syndrome and ways to build confidence (Advance HE, 2021).

Recognition about the value of social capital as part of career capital is also reflected in women only development programmes. Both formal and informal networking opportunities, identified as important in addressing the gender gap in HE (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Pyke, 2013), are included within many professional development and leadership initiatives for women. Aurora, for example, facilitates networking and coaching at both institutional level and sector level as a key element in their programmes. The impact of developing networks as career building blocks has been found by research to be helpful for women (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010; Parker et al., 2018; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2016). DeFrank-Cole et al., refer to work by Helgesen (1995, p. 20 cited by DeFrank-Cole et al., 2016, p.32) who describes these connections amongst women as a "web of inclusion". This aligns with research which finds high value in mentoring for women (de Vries, 2011; de Vries et al., 2006; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Singh et al., 2009). Although networking, coaching and mentoring each serve a different purpose, they are overlapping. Flemming and Nelson (2007, p. 20) highlight that "relationships are important to women's psychological and social development as well as their identity and sense of self", finding that communities built on social bonds and shared values and non-hierarchical relationships were especially meaningful to women.

2.9   Professional recognition and teaching awards

This literature review has highlighted many career challenges that women in HE face, including gender stereotypes and accruing prestige and career capital to progress their careers. This final section builds on Sections 1.3.3 and 1.5.1 in Chapter 1 which introduced the categories of professional recognition for teaching which are a focus of this research. It summarises research findings regarding teaching fellowships for those in teaching and

supporting learning roles in HE, roles which are often held by women, and highlights the connection being made in this thesis to the prestige economy.

So far, research into HEA Fellowship schemes has mostly focused on HEA Fellowships more generally with less attention paid to Senior or Principal categories of Fellowship. Meanwhile, much research in this area has been in the form of institutional case studies (Botham, 2018; Fung, 2014; Peat, 2015; Spowart et al., 2016; Thornton, 2014; van der Sluis et al., 2016, 2017) due to the importance of studying schemes in their local context (Shaw, 2018) although there have also been some broader cross-institutional studies (Cathcart et al., 2021; Pilkington, 2018; Spowart et al., 2019, 2020; Turner et al., 2013; van der Sluis, 2021). There have also been studies which evaluate the National Teaching Fellowship scheme (Austen et al., 2018; Halse et al., 2007; Quinsee & Jones-Devitt, 2018; Rickinson et al., 2012; Rolfe, 2018; Skelton, 2003) including researching the impact on individuals who achieve NTF (Brown, 2011; Frame et al., 2006; Warnes, 2021). By also exploring these areas through a gendered lens, and in relation to the prestige economy, this thesis is contributing new knowledge to an emerging area of research.

2.9.1 Emergence of HEA Fellowships in the sector

The introduction chapter outlined why there became a "political steer" (Spowart et al., 2019, p.215) for the sector to invest significantly in Advance HE accredited professional recognition programmes (CPD Schemes). HEA Fellowship at Descriptor 2 (FHEA) became a sector expectation for those on full-time teaching and research (T&R) and teaching intensive (TI) contracts. Many institutions set HEA Fellowship targets (van der Sluis et al., 2016) despite widespread concerns about these becoming an "unavoidable driver" for applicants (Botham, 2018, p.170; Spowart et al., 2016). The UK sector has seen a huge rise in accredited CPD schemes as a result, and a corresponding rise in Fellowships at Descriptor 2. Beyond the UK, the UKPSF is increasingly being adopted by HE sectors elsewhere (who generally simply refer to the "PSF") including in Australasia, China and the Middle East, with a growing number of accredited institutions offering HEA Fellowships (see Table 1.1.and Figure 1.1).

2.9.2 Evaluating the impact of HEA Fellowships

A focus of research into HEA Fellowships to date has been to explore whether continuing professional development (CPD) schemes offering HEA Fellowships enhance teaching quality for the individual or the institution, despite the neoliberalist, league-table driven agendas underpinning such schemes (Botham, 2018; Cathcart et al., 2021; Peat, 2015; Shaw, 2018; Spowart et al., 2016, 2019; Thornton, 2014; van der Sluis, 2016). Doubts are expressed about the link between CPD schemes and high-quality teaching, with studies providing a mixed picture, not least because of the difficulty in measuring something which is so intangible (see Bell & Brooks, 2019), and "no definition of what 'good teaching' actually looks like" (Spowart et al., 2016, p.207). Many studies (for example, Cathcart et al., 2021; Peat, 2015; Shaw, 2018; Spowart et al., 2016; van der Sluis, 2016;) highlight the need for institutions to ensure such programmes are meaningful, and "do more as a force for development than simply provide a mechanism for one-off retrospective bench-marking" (Shaw, 2018 p. 156). Studies consistently emphasise that involvement from senior leadership is pivotal to the success of such schemes (Peat, 2015; Spowart et al., 2016; 2020) and highlight that the risks of HEA Fellowship programmes becoming "a tokenistic exercise" driven by institutional pressure and marketisation can be offset *if* institutions genuinely embrace a culture of CPD for teaching (Peat, 2015, p.94). Similarly, for Cathcart et al., (2021), the solution lies in institutions encouraging an approach which is underpinned by a community of supportive peers engaging in the process.

Two recent studies, one about HEA Senior and Principal Fellows (Spowart et al., 2019) and the other about HEA Senior Fellows (van der Sluis, 2021) both found respondents were somewhat cynical about their achievement of Fellowship and reported little evidence of positive impact on practice or personal gain. Meanwhile Studies have found that HEA Fellows at Descriptor 2, which is the category many institutions have set targets for, were generally motivated by management imperatives – driven by neoliberal agendas - to apply for Fellowship. Ironically, the introduction of a separate professional teacher identity in HE, which was designed to be helpful, may have exacerbated the research-teaching divide (Barnett, 2003) and heightened the potential for identity to be an issue amongst those in teaching roles (Skelton, 2012). The culture change required to redress a well-established

imbalance in HE between the status of research and teaching is slow-moving (Spowart et al., 2020). However, there is evidence that the connections between accredited professional recognition, promotion and career progression are becoming more embedded in HR policy and practice, for example by introducing clearly articulated promotion pathways for teaching-intensive as well as research-intensive roles (Cashmore et al., 2013; Spowart et al., 2020).

In addition to increased opportunities for career progression and promotion (Spowart et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2013), other benefits have been identified. Spowart et al., (2020, p.109) highlight a link to prestige factors by suggesting that accredited HEA Fellowship schemes provide access to "quality-assured esteem indicators" which can positively impact institutional culture as well as career progression, for example by supporting teaching-focused staff to gain appropriate recognition and esteem through teaching and learning leadership and influence within their institutions. Studies have found evidence of professional recognition enhancing practice, especially if applicants take a reflective approach to the process, which can re-affirm a commitment to teaching, to innovative practice and to scholarship of teaching (Botham, 2018; Cathcart et al., 2021; Shaw, 2018, Thornton, 2014; van der Sluis et al., 2017).

Of interest to this study is that research studies have found evidence of improved confidence levels, and an enhanced sense of professional identity and belonging for those who achieve HEA Fellowship. For example, Botham (2018, p.170) highlights the significance of "previously unrecognised achievements as a teacher" improved confidence and resulting sense of validation. Similarly, Cathcart et al., (2021) found HEA Fellows reported a stronger sense of self-efficacy and professional identity, as well as a sense of validation and a stronger sense of belonging to a community of peers with shared values about teaching. Likewise, a study of Senior and Principal Fellows by Eccles and Bradley (2014, 2015, n.d.) reports an increase in professional credibility resulting in enhanced self-confidence, self-awareness and sense of validation as a teacher. Participants in studies by Botham (2018) and Eccles and Bradley (2014, 2015, n.d.) had used their enhanced confidence to develop their own practice and to champion wider institutional change via mentorship and leadership of other colleagues' practice. These findings are nicely captured by Fung (2014, p.10) about the rich potential of

accredited CPD schemes: "They are about creating spaces for individuals and teams to flourish where they may otherwise have been overlooked. They are about creating a culturally rich community of people who care about learning and learners".

2.9.3 National and University Teaching Fellowships

The National Teaching Fellowship Scheme is "the most substantial reward for individual teaching excellence" (Frame et al., 2006). Drawing on similar schemes in countries like Australia, the USA and Canada (Skelton, 2004) it exists alongside and complements HEA Fellowship schemes. It is, however, more exclusive and highly competitive, based on achievement and impact rather than a criterion-based application process: approximately fifty National Teaching Fellowships are awarded across the sector each year. As outlined in the introduction chapter, Section 1.5.1, the scheme aims to raise the profile of learning and teaching nationally, to develop a national community of teaching champions and to celebrate individual excellence, in particular outstanding impact on student learning.

The University Teaching Fellowship Scheme referred to in this research mirrors the NTF in many respects but operates at a local, institutional level, with a thriving community of practice and some recipients being subsequently mentored to apply for NTF. Like the NTFS, UTFS is highly competitive: most years only three to five UTFs are awarded by the institution at the centre of this research.

2.9.4 Evaluating impact of National Teaching Fellowships

Research evaluating the NTFS tends to identify more positive benefits for individuals than for institutions (Skelton, 2004; Austen et al., 2018) and there has been criticism that the NTFS focuses more on the individual teacher rather than on teaching itself (Land & Gordon, 2015). Although the NTFS has helped to raise the profile and language of teaching excellence it is criticised for not having had sufficient impact as a vehicle for sector-wide change (Skelton, 2004; Rickinson et al., 2012).

In the same way engagement from senior leadership is identified as important to the success of HEA Fellowship schemes (see above), Frame et al., (2006) suggest that the way in which different institutions value the award will influence impact for individuals. They also

reference the tension between teaching and research as a factor here, with teaching-intensive institutions being more likely to value and celebrate such awards than research-intensive, where NTF could even be "a millstone" (Frame et al., p.414). Similarly, Skelton (2004, p.461) found some recipients in research intensive institutions worried that the NTF award could isolate them from their identity as researchers and even be a "poisoned chalice". In a more recent sector-wide evaluation by Austen et al., (2018) only a minority of institutions reported that the prestige associated with NTFS had enhanced their national profile and helped to establish a culture where teaching is valued in a pressured and changing sector; despite this several institutions believed NTFS could be a useful marketing tool with which to attract students and staff.

Benefits identified for individuals relate to the concept of prestige, or "esteem", which is more present in the literature here than for HEA Fellowships. Benefits include recognition as outstanding teachers and associated esteem, referred to as "kudos and status" (Austen et al., 2018, p.8), or as a "prestigious accolade" which gives "clout, kudos and credibility" and supports career progression (Rickinson et al., 2012, p.15). References to increased confidence and a sense of validation, which can lead to influence and impact on colleagues, entirely overlaps with the literature for HEA Fellowships. Skelton (2004) and Rickinson et al., (2012) both found that recipients felt a sense of validation and felt more confident following their award. Skelton (2004) reported individuals felt they had found their voice and felt stronger in their identity, whilst Rickinson et al., (2012, p.17) reported expanded networks, strengthened profile and influence: "people will come to you for help". Also similar to findings about Senior and Principal Fellows by Eccles and Bradley (2014, 2015, n.d.), research into NTFs has evidenced increased opportunities for networking, collaboration and mentoring of others through formal and informal communities of practice (Frame et al., 2012; Austen et al., 2018).

Frame et al.'s (2006) study *does* briefly consider gender, finding that more women felt an increased sense of self-confidence and pride than male NTF winners; women also felt relief that their hard work had not gone to waste: "[it was] wonderful to find years of work hadn't just disappeared" (p. 413). However, it appeared male NTFs had seen a more positive impact in terms of career profile and progression than female NTFs. Frame et al., (2006, p.414)

found that although the award had "opened doors" for winners, it had also added to their workloads.

2.9.5 New opportunities

Not only in the UK but Australia, the USA and many other countries, and for many years, the intractable problem of teaching being treated as a lower status counterpart to research in HE has been raised in the literature (Cashmore & Ramsden, 2009; Chalmers, 2011; Court, 1999; Edwards, 1992; Fairweather, 2002, 2005; Fung & Gordon, 2016; Gibbs, 1995; Gibbs & Habeshaw, 2002; Greenbank, 2006; Macfarlane, 2011; Parker, 2008; Ramsden, 2009; Ramsden & Martin, 1996; White et al., 2011; Young, 2006). Achievements in research have driven national and international league tables and determined who is promoted in a prestige economy in which teaching is persistently perceived to have a lower status (Young 2006).

More recently, and prompted by the sector focus on teaching enhancement, and a rise in so-called "teaching-only" or "teaching intensive" (TI) roles and contracts, and professional services roles which are teaching-related, attention has turned to ways in which promotion panels might more appropriately recognise and reward teaching quality and at different levels (Cashmore, 2013; Locke, 2014; HEA, 2013; Fung and Gordon, 2016). Sector progress is patchy (Graham, 2015); however, some Russell Group as well as post-1992 institutions now offer an academic promotion track for Associate Professor and Professor titles based on teaching as well as research achievements (Fung & Gordon, 2016). For women in HE who, either by choice or otherwise, have teaching rather than research focused roles, these developments offer important new opportunities for progression.

This section has highlighted the potential for teaching recognition and awards to enrich the career prospects for successful applicants by enhancing their prestige and career capital. Recognition as teaching champions results in validation of achievements and increased prestige, also referred to as esteem, kudos and credibility. This in turn can improve confidence and opens doors to opportunities for individuals, as teaching and learning champions, to provide mentorship, to join communities of practice and to influence teaching practice within their institutions. The extent to which this is realised as a strategic

opportunity, and whether it is helpful to women in the context of a persistent gender gap in HE, has not been explored by research thus far, and is a gap being addressed by this thesis.

2.10 Conclusion

Building on the introduction in Chapter One, this literature review chapter has explored the key concepts and themes in relation to this research and explored relevant findings from research. In doing so, it has provided an overview of two key concepts for this thesis: gender and prestige. These concepts underpin two key themes which have also been explored in this chapter: challenges facing career women in HE in relation to the gender gap, and professional recognition and awards for teaching. The overlap with other themes, such as neoliberalism, values and career-capital, has also been highlighted. A case has been made, both here and in the introductory chapter, for carrying out research which explores whether senior categories of teaching fellowships provide positive opportunities for mid-career women within neoliberal management practices and a gendered prestige economy in HE.

Findings from the literature review presented in this chapter, combined with the institutional context of a high proportion of women seeking senior categories of teaching Fellowships compared to their male colleagues, shaped the research questions which are set out in the following Chapter 3 alongside the theoretical approach, research design and methodology which emerged from these questions.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter presented an overview of challenges and opportunities experienced by women in the HE sector and presented a case for deepening our understanding about the gender gap and the experiences of mid-career women working within the prestige economy. More specifically, the research explores perceptions of prestige by women in HE in relation to senior categories of teaching fellowships. The purpose of the research is to increase our understanding of a widely acknowledged gender gap in HE, to shift the focus of research from women leaders to the lesser heard voices of mid-career women who champion teaching and learning in HE and to inform institutional policy and practice in a fast changing and highly pressured sector.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the research questions arising from gaps identified in the literature review were:

RQ1: What can we learn from the career journeys of mid-career women who champion teaching in higher education?

RQ2: What prestige, if any, do mid-career women associate with senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

RQ3: How do mid-career women articulate the impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

This chapter explains the research paradigm, framework and methods within which these research questions are situated. The literature on research methods highlights the need for our research design, methodology and methods to be aligned with our purpose (Creswell, 2013a; Kumar, 2011; Thomas, 2013). Accordingly, the following sections provide a rationale for the methodology and methods selected, explaining the appropriacy of these choices in addressing the research questions. Broader methodological considerations such as my own ontological and epistemological assumptions are presented first, followed by an outline and

rationale for the approaches and methods which frame the research. Procedures for data collection and analysis are explained, followed by sections on ethical considerations and issues relating to doing insider research and finally, some reflections on trustworthiness of the study. A diagram summarising the methodological approach is shown in Figure 3.7, Section 3.7.

3.2   Paradigm design and rationale

Being a woman researcher examining the experience of women in response to gender inequality in higher education has led me to examine feminist research theory and values in considering my own theoretical position. The traditional positivist research paradigm was based on ontological assumptions that there was one version of reality, and epistemological beliefs that knowledge could easily be measured using reliable methods. Second wave feminism questioned how research was produced, who produced it and its purpose (Clegg, 1985; Harding, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Universal knowledge was fundamentally questioned as being defined by men and not inclusive or universal at all. Traditional approaches to the social sciences based on positivist, quantitative approaches were seen to be at odds with the political, emancipatory goals of feminism and to exclude women's voices (Mies, 1979; Oakley, 1974/1985b). The positivist paradigm was stereotyped as male research and quantitative research techniques were criticised for reducing individuals to measurable categories, being preoccupied with prediction, controlling variables and concerned with facts rather than human experience (Harding, 1986). Quantitative approaches within the positivist paradigm were interpreted as yet another way of controlling and even silencing women's stories by male researchers (Mies, 1979; Smith, 1988, 1990). Research about women, it was argued, should be done by women and aligned to feminist goals.

Following second wave feminism and underpinned by postmodernist thinking, a less didactive approach to feminist research has emerged alongside general agreement that it is a broad category which can accommodate multiple perspectives with the most important principle being to do the right thing (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Stanley, 1990). Although there is still a strong affinity between feminism and qualitative methods (Hesse-Biber, 2014) there is also a recognition of the value of quantitative techniques within a mixed methods approach,

for example, in collecting numerical data about gender inequality (Scott, 2010). More helpfully, the literature offers guidelines for acting with integrity when carrying out research about women's experience (Bell, 2014; Hesse-Biber, 2014). I highlight below some of the principles which have helped to both shape and situate my research within a feminist, qualitative and interpretivist paradigm.

For Stanley (1990, p. 14), feminist research is not only a standpoint, but is "a way of being" and in this sense it is both an ontology and an epistemology. For Stanley (1990) it is the experience of *and* the speaking out against gender inequality which generates a feminist ontology; it is the critical analysis of this within the research process which leads to a feminist epistemology. The starting point for my study is the experiences of mid-career women in higher education, with gender inequality being a central and underpinning consideration. As a woman researcher who is herself in the mid-career stage, it was important to me to address a gap in research by listening to women telling their own stories in their own words, rather than assuming I knew the kind of story they might tell.

By taking this stance, and by relating to my participants via my own position, my study is rooted in standpoint theory (Harding, 1986, 2004; Smith, 1988), which values researchers understanding the research context rather than looking in from the outside, particularly looking in from a position of privilege. Standpoint theory emerged in response to and as a way of addressing social inequality in relation to gender and unjust power systems (Smith, 1988, 2005) and was a feminist response to the need for "an alternative sociology, from the standpoint of women" (Smith, 1990, p. 27) with a focus on the everyday world as problematic. Standpoint theorists promote the value of an experiential epistemology and aim to give voice to marginalised groups in research about everyday experiences within a patriarchal society where authoritative knowledge has historically been defined by men (Harding, 1987, 1991; Hill Collins, 1997; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2020; Smith, 1988). In the same vein, standpoint theory has informed criticism of a predominantly white, middle class feminist movement for excluding other voices and perspectives such as black and working-class women (Hill Collins, 2009; hooks, 1984/2015b).

Feminist standpoint theory is aligned to an interpretivist, constructivist epistemology and also to postmodern theory in which there is no such thing as one truth and meaning is socially constructed. A defining tenet of postmodernism is that truth is not waiting to be discovered and neatly framed, in fact apparent certainty should always be approached with scepticism. A key objective of postmodernism is, instead, to critically re-visit what has traditionally been taken to be truth, to question grand theories and to subvert the notion of expert. Postmodernism is also feminist in the diversity of voices it embraces and for a deconstructive approach to seeking answers (Frost & Elichaoff, 2014; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). The extreme of a postmodernist position, and a potential challenge, is that researchers might find themselves on constantly shifting sands, questioning everything. In practice, interpretivist and postmodern approaches to research are helpful for social research which tackles the complexities and messiness of human experience and understanding (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003) which is where my research, and much feminist research, sits. In this realm, there are indeed no fixed answers, and one person's truth is, simply, *their* truth. As a researcher my goal is interpretation rather than findings, aiming for tentative rather than certain conclusions. My interest "not in prediction and control but in understanding" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 4) places my research firmly in an interpretivist and constructivist epistemology within the qualitative realm.

In standpoint theory these ideas are also reflected in the expression "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988), a term which recognises the importance of context and of everyday experience in research. A person's multifaceted experiences form a standpoint, or personal lens, through which they view and understand their world, with no two perspectives being the same. Educational research fits an interpretivist paradigm because it is, and should be, grounded in people's experience (Basit, 2010; Morrison, 2012). In the interpretive realm and in standpoint theory, reality is subjective and personal context is relevant, which means the perspective of each mid-career woman who participates in my research is equally important.

Embedded within this interpretivist epistemology is the influence of the researcher's own standpoint, articulated by Smith as: "the only way of knowing a socially constructed world is knowing it from within. We can never stand outside it." (Smith, 1990a, p.22). As a researcher who is interested in lived experience, the interpretive realm sits comfortably with me,

whereby "there is an over-arching view that all human life is experienced and constructed from a subjective perspective" (Morrison, 2012, p. 23). In other words, the social world is not separable from those who are participants within it, including the researcher, and the importance of interpretation is openly acknowledged (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; G. Thomas, 2013). Research which draws upon co-creation and interpretation by the researcher and research participants is sometimes referred to as a "double hermeneutic" (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006), which draws on the term used by Giddens (1984) to describe interpretations of realities which have already been socially constructed. In this study, my interpretation of the data will be my perceptions, as researcher, about research participants' perceptions.

3.3   A case study approach

A case study entails an in-depth investigation into a particular situation or set of circumstances in its real-life, natural context. One of the key characteristics highlighted in the literature about case study research is that the context is not separable from the phenomenon being studied (Gillham, 2000; Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2018). One of the main advantages of case study research is that is enables the researcher to gain a deep understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context, and it can provide rich insights into human experience and perceptions of that context. As Basit states (2010, p.19), case study research enables "a unique portrayal of real people in a real social situation by means of vivid accounts of events, feelings and perceptions".

The interpretivist case study approach adopted for this thesis falls into the category of an *explanatory case study* (Yin, 2018) by seeking to understand the relationship between the gender gap, the prestige economy and the high number of women achieving senior teaching fellowships within the institution studied. At the same time, by studying the experience of fifteen individual participants within the institution, it is similar to a *collective case study* (Basit, 2010) by gaining an overall picture via a series of individual studies. Although a key benefit of case study research is the richly contextualised nature of the study, this is also highlighted as the main disadvantage, namely that researchers are less able to generalise data from a case study to the wider population (Basit, 2010; Hancock & Agozz, 2017; Yin,

2018). However, case study researchers do not seek to generalise their findings to the whole population but instead, use case studies to help understand similar cases and contexts (Basit, 2010). As Yin (2018, p.21) explains, the goal for case study researchers is to "expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalisations)".

Hancock and Algozzine (2017, p.6) provide a helpful checklist for researchers about when case study research is appropriate. This research takes a case study approach for several reasons. Principally, the research was inspired by the institutional context, where a higher number of women sought senior categories of teaching fellowships; the research questions were therefore specific to the institution being studied. Importantly, case study research is aligned with the feminist research principles informing this study, outlined in Section 3.2, including the importance of context and listening to the real voices and lived experiences of women. Additionally, the expectations of researchers on a professional doctorate programme are that the research will focus on a real, specific professional context. Case study research is therefore a natural choice for EdD research, enabling insights gained from the case study to be translated into action for improvement of policy and practice (Basit, 2010). Finally, on a practical level, my position as an academic developer within the institution equipped me with knowledge about the institution and access to research participants; a focus on one, single institution I was familiar with was therefore also convenient and achievable.

3.3.1 Insider research

As a doctoral researcher carrying out research amongst colleagues within the institution in which I work, this study falls firmly within the realm of insider research (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Fleming, 2018; Mercer, 2007). Similar to the selection of case study research, insider research was a natural choice for the research design for two reasons: the research questions were informed by the institutional context, and insider research is aligned with the feminist theory underpinning the research design (see Section 3.2). Although insider research is increasingly popular within the field of education (Greene, 2014; Mercer, 2007) it is acknowledged that insider researchers can face multiple challenges relating to ethics and credibility and be subject to greater scrutiny than other types of research as a result

(Fleming, 2018; Greene, 2014; Trowler, 2011). In the following sections I reflect on some of the insider research issues that arose during this research.

One of the most helpful perspectives I encountered in the literature about insider research was the reassurance that "outside vs. inside" is a false dichotomy. Instead, insider research exists somewhere on a continuum which is likely to shift rather than stay static (Fleming, 2018; Greene, 2014; Hellawell, 2006; Mercer, 2007; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). One's position on this continuum is defined by the "closeness" of the researcher to the subject(s) being researched (Mercer, 2007), described by Hellawell (2006, p.489) as "subtly varying shades of 'insiderism' and 'outsiderism'". In this sense, we are all likely to be both insider and outsider researchers (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013; Hellawell, 2006). In my research, I was an insider because we were all women, mid-career, at the same institution and we had all been awarded a senior category of teaching fellowship for our achievements in promoting teaching quality. With some participants I shared further overlaps, for example having children of the same age or caring for elderly parents. But this meant with other participants, I shared less "closeness", for example I was on a different type of contract, or a different grade, or they were younger than me. Mercer (2007), Hellawell (2006), Brannick and Coghlan (2007) and others robustly challenge the notion that one kind of research is better than the other. As Hellawell (2006, p.487) states, researchers should ideally be able to step both inside *and* outside the experiences of those we research, because "both empathy and alienation are useful qualities for a researcher". I return to the concept of this continuum in Section 3.9 about positionality.

3.3.2 Research context

The institution studied for this thesis is a public "red brick", university in England, founded approximately one hundred years ago and aspiring to be excellent in terms of both research rankings and teaching quality. It has been ranked within the top 40 universities in the UK for the past five years (The Complete University Guide, 2021) and was awarded Silver in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework results (TEF, 2017). In addition to its main campuses in England, it has two campuses located internationally and many international partnership programmes. In 2020 it was home to 23,000 students from around the world, and in 2020, at

its campuses in England, it employed over 4000 academic and support staff, 60.9% of whom were female, and 39.1% were male.

Section 1.5.2 in the introduction to this thesis outlined some of the challenges faced by the institution in terms of an on-going leadership and gender pay gap; that section also highlighted that the senior leadership team were strongly committed to improving diversity and inclusion. Recent initiatives include: the creation of a new Dean for Diversity and Inclusion role, a review of unconscious bias training, a Race Equality Review, investment in women only professional development programmes, and an overhaul of the promotion process to ensure that diversity and inclusion considerations are better reflected. More recently, the university has worked closely with the University and College Union to undertake a review of fixed term contracts including the Teaching Fellow role, which is held by a majority of women.

The institution's CPD framework, like most in the sector, is accredited by Advance HE, enabling the institution to award HEA Fellowships; it consists of an application route based on experience as well as a credit-bearing taught route. HEA Fellowship is a requirement for new lecturers as well as for promotion to Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer) for all academic staff with teaching as part of their contract. HEA Senior and Principal Fellowship, and University and National Teaching Fellowship, are considered above and beyond the requirement, but are referenced as examples of what may be used as evidence of excellence in teaching for promotion to Associate Professor or Professor.

3.3.3 Research participants

A key benefit to carrying out insider research is said to be easier access to naturalistic data and to research participants (Trowler, 2011; Mercer, 2007) due to knowledge about who to contact and how to do so, although insider researchers are also warned about the potential drawbacks to such "pre-understandings" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). My role as an academic developer involving work across the institution meant that even if we did not know each other, we may have come across each other's names. To minimise pre-conceptions during interview, analysis and write up, as far as possible I chose to interview colleagues who I did not know well.

I identified potential participants based on three criteria: (i) gender, (ii) fitting my broad definition of mid-career as defined in the introductory chapter (iii) holding either HEA Senior Fellowship, HEA Principal Fellowship, University Teaching Fellowship, National Teaching Fellowship status, or more than one of these. Working from published membership lists, available to all staff, I then divided the potential participant lists into broad discipline and professional/support services groups to aim for a range of perspectives from across the institution. I staged my invitations to maintain this balance, so that if I received a response declining the invitation to take part, I invited another colleague from the same group. Participants' age range was between 35 to 60 years. In terms of roles within the institution, 10 held academic roles (on T&R or TI contracts), 1 held a Teaching Fellow role at the time of the study, although 3 of those on academic contracts had previously been Teaching Fellows, and 4 held roles in professional services. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the number of participants who held each category of fellowship and the location of participants within the institution.

Participant numbers for each category of Fellowship		
SFHEA	Advance HE Senior Fellowship	11
PFHEA	Advance HE Principal Fellowship	2
UTF	University Teaching Fellowship	10
NTF	National Teaching Fellowship	2

Table 3.1 Participant numbers for categories of fellowship

Location of participants across the institution	
Sciences	5
Humanities	3
Social Sciences	3
Central Support Services	4

Table 3.2 Location of participants across the institution

3.4 A narrative approach

Case study research is a *main* research framework (Gillham, 2000) within which sub-methods can be framed, such as visual and narrative methods. My choice of using career journey maps and narrative interviews falls within a narrative approach to case study research. This choice also provides a natural fit with the qualitative, interpretive, feminist research values outlined in my paradigm rationale and with the research questions posed in my study. With narrative inquiry, personal experiences are not studied in isolation in recognition that biography and context are interwoven which therefore requires a more holistic approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Trahar, 2013). It is why narrative inquiry and case study research are suitable for research into fields such as education, career development and gender; these are conceptual issues where experience, human emotion and perception are more pertinent than dates and measurements. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) suggest that a turn towards narrative inquiry has been made possible by four key shifts, all four of which reflect feminist values. These four shifts are: a more collaborative, co-constructionist relationship between researcher and researched; a shift in focus from numbers to a broader conception of data; a move from general and universal truths to local and specific detail; and a growing acceptance of alternative epistemologies.

Creswell (2013b) identifies three types of narrative research practice: autobiography, when the narrative is put together by the researcher; oral history, when respondents reflect on particular past events; life history, when a respondent's whole life is narrated. My research draws on the oral history approach because it was not necessary for my respondents to narrate all the details of their lives. Instead, I invited respondents to reflect, through mapping and speaking, on experiences and perceptions relevant to the themes of gender, prestige, professional recognition and career progression.

Finally, and in line with feminist approaches, Elliott (2005) highlights that in narrative research there is an awareness that researchers are narrators too. This is in recognition of the collaborative nature of narrative research. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the relationship between the teller, the researcher and the narrative as a reconstruction, while Riessman highlights that narratives are "always a co-construction" (2008, p. 31) and

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to restorying. These understandings overlap with the reference in Section 3.2 to the "double hermeneutic". However, the constructed nature of narrative inquiry, whilst being a strength for many qualitative researchers, is also a reason why narrative methods are criticised for being vulnerable to bias and memory lapses (Floyd, 2012), a point which is addressed in Section 3.9 about trustworthiness of the research.

3.4.1 Career journey maps

There has been a striking rise in the use of visual materials by qualitative researchers in recent years (Banks & Zeitlyn, 2015; Prosser & Loxley, 2008; Rose, 2001); more recently digital technologies have enabled a wider range of audio and video formats (Pink, 2013). The inclusion of visual methods within my research design was chosen to give participants greater ownership of their stories in line with the feminist research approach outlined in Section 3.2, to provide helpful focus during the interviews and enrich the data collected.

Selecting career journey maps for my research design was inspired by Kandiko Howson et al., (2018) who invited mid-career women in HE to draw conceptual maps depicting where they saw their careers in five to ten years. I broadened this idea to include past, present and future career elements as well as positive and negative aspects within their journeys because maps are helpful for research which seeks a longer-term perspective rather than only capturing how participants feel in the moment (Elliott, 2005). Similar to "rivers of life" and "leadership rivers" used elsewhere in educational research contexts (Burnard, 2000; Burns, 2000; Stevenson, 2013) career maps encourage participants to take a reflective overview, and to pull relevant thoughts together before responding in person to prompts during follow-up narrative interviews. In this sense, I hoped the maps would act as a stimulus for sharing experiences during the interviews.

I also hoped that drawing the career journey maps would prove to be a useful and interesting reflective task for participants. There is a well-established body of literature on the value of reflective practice in higher education as a tool for professional development (Brookfield, 1995; Moon, 2004; Schön, 1995). The process of engaging in research interviews is highlighted in some studies as a developmental tool and an opportunity for participants to learn about themselves (see, for example, Jones et al., 2012; Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Turner &

Mavin, 2008). Drawing the career journey maps and taking part in the interviews would, I hoped, provide a reflexive space for participants to promote self-awareness and learning about their position and direction as working women in HE. I was explicit about this in my information sheet (see Appendix A).

Finally, my decision to use maps relates to credibility of the research. I hoped the additional data source would complement my narrative interview data and support the interview process by providing additional insights and prompts for me as researcher. In turn I hoped this would reinforce my confidence during analysis and interpretation and thus help to clarify and strengthen my findings.

3.4.2 Narrative interviews

Interviews can be especially helpful when researching experiences and insights of participants within a case study because "most case studies are about human affairs or actions" (Yin, 2018, p.121). Common features of narrative research identified by Elliott (2005) also support my choice of narrative interviews as a research tool within a feminist research context. These include an intention to empower respondents to control how to tell their story in their own words and to choose which experiences to recount in relation to the research themes, with little interruption or direction by the researcher. A defining feature of narrative interviews is that individuals tell their own accounts of lived experiences (Floyd, 2012, Creswell, 2013b; Clandinin, 2007). Elliott (2005) also identifies that attention to process and change over time, and to representations of self, are enabled through narrative. This is pertinent to a study which explores perspectives on women's past, present and future career journeys. Rich understanding is unlikely to be revealed through a traditional question-answer interaction but might emerge through a narrative interview setting which enables the telling of experiences which are personal and reflective in nature (Clough, 2002; Kvale, 2007).

3.5　Data collection

3.5.1 Collecting career journey maps

I provided clear guidelines for creating the career map and emphasised that there were no right or wrong ways of completing it, it was individual and conceptual, and need not look like a map at all (Appendix B). As advised by Prosser and Loxley (2008), and to reduce any uncertainty about the task, I provided two examples beforehand. For the examples I completed a map myself and sought permission from a colleague who took part in a career map trial (see Section 3.5.3) to also use hers. I emailed the task instructions to participants with the two example maps at the point of us agreeing an interview date, and then emailed a reminder to complete the map a week beforehand. I received some maps a few days ahead of the interview date, and some at the start of the interview.

3.5.2 Carrying out narrative interviews

I included consideration of the physical space for the interviews. I booked rooms on campus which were light and pleasant; I provided refreshments to provide a welcoming atmosphere and to show appreciation towards participants for giving up their time. All participants gave consent for the interviews to be recorded (Appendix A). Each interview lasted between forty-five and seventy-five minutes and was recorded in MP3 format using a Sony hand-held IC digital audio recorder with an integrated USB stick for transferring sound files to a computer.

The importance of respecting interviewees in qualitative research and recognising them as equal partners in the process is emphasised in the literature (Kvale, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and aligned to a feminist epistemology, as highlighted in Section 3.2. Narrative and semi-structured interviews are often referred to as being like a conversation (Robson, 2002, p. 273) and due to the in-depth and personal nature of the themes being explored for my research, I wished to convey this sense, whilst allowing the respondent to do most of the talking. By giving participants space to provide honest and detailed answers in their own time, I hoped they would feel in control of their own stories. Interviewing requires active rather than passive listening from the researcher, a skill which demands concentration,

sensitivity and perception (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I took advice for narrative interviewing from Riessman (2008, p.26) to "listen in an emotionally attentive and engaged way".

The career journey maps were intended to provide useful prompts during the interviews; I nevertheless devised a flexible set of questions as an interview guide and reference point (Appendix C), as advised by Robson (2002) and Rubin and Rubin (2012). Finally, a "narrative interview" does not mean that respondents always provide lengthy or full answers without prompting. As Riessman (2008, p.25) suggests, it may be necessary to keep asking follow-up questions to maintain the flow of details. I purposely used open-ended prompts to encourage reflective and in-depth responses (Kvale, 2007).

3.5.3 Pilot activity

Gillham (2005) helpfully distinguishes between *trialling* and *piloting*. Trialling is a pre-pilot activity which is carried out with people outside the research participant group but who are similar in profile, to gather relevant feedback and make appropriate adjustments ahead of the main study. Piloting is carried out with no more than two or three actual participants, not to ask them for feedback but to observe "how it runs" (Gillham, 2005, p.25), to transcribe the data and carry out an analysis of content. Gillham acknowledges this is a time-consuming process for researchers but emphasises that this detailed process will highlight where subtle adjustments are required, lead to better quality data and thus avoid problems during the analysis stage.

Drawing on Gillham's advice, there were two stages to my pilot, which was carried out following the granting of ethical approval by the University of Reading (Appendix A). Firstly, I trialled the career journey map task with two colleagues, providing them with the participant-facing documentation via email as I intended to do with my actual research participants. We held a de-brief meeting afterwards and reflected on the clarity of the task instructions as well as the resulting maps. Their resulting maps alongside their interest and encouragement provided me with confidence that the task was not too onerous and that it was a useful reflective exercise for participants to engage in. Secondly, I carried out a pilot with three of the total fifteen participants in the study. This involved interviewing, transcribing and reflecting upon the data and my approach. From the pilot I learned that

interviewees needed little prompting to relay their experiences, but I needed to adopt a more neutral position and say less. I also gained confidence that the approach would elicit rich data suitable for coding and thematic analysis.

3.6   Data analysis

It became clear to me when reading the literature on narrative analysis (Kim, 2016; Riessman, 2008; Silverman, 2006) that I wished to take a holistic *and* contextualised view rather than a fragmented analysis of accounts. As Kim (2016) states, the dimensions of analysis in narrative inquiry are not clear cut and Kvale (2007, p.115) reassures researchers that a "bricolage" approach is a common mode of interview analysis. Kim (2016, p.222) advises narrative researchers to approach analysis and interpretation "with a notion of flirtation…" to "adapt, modify, and deepen existing analysis methods" to fit their research design and purpose.

My commitment to a qualitative, interpretive and feminist research paradigm resulted in the adoption of a thematic approach to analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, its key advantage being its flexibility and its suitability for an interpretive stance. Thematic analysis involves an inductive, multi-layered process of identifying themes and sub-themes to explore commonalities and differences across responses. Researchers look for themes or patterns "that are important and interesting", interpreting and explaining findings rather than simply categorising or summarising them (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p.3353). Thematic analysis allowed me to also retain the integrity of each interview, because context and individual lived experience are always relevant (Reissman, 2008), and can help us understand "why and how things happened the way they did" (Kim, 2016, p.197). For example, if I examined a quotation, and compared it with a similar comment by another respondent, I considered them in the context of the respondents' complete accounts. This approach is why familiarity with the data was essential during my analysis.

The following sections outline the approach taken to transcription and to thematically and manually identifying themes and sub-themes from the data gathered. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) emphasise that thinking about analysis should start from the very beginning and permeate the entire research process. In my case, analysis and interpretation took shape

from the moment I began to receive the completed career journey maps and started interviewing, in part by making notes throughout (Floyd, 2012). From that point, the process was iterative; as Braun and Clarke (2006, p.86) note, analysis is a "recursive process".

3.6.1 Analysing career journey maps

Analysis of the career maps fell into two layers: the first layer occurring prior to the interviews because the maps were mostly received beforehand and informed the interviews: this aspect of analysis fell within phase one of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, involving a close and detailed reading of the data. Rose (2001) reassures us that there is no right or wrong way to interpret images but cautions us to approach them with a critical eye because of their "complexity and richness" (p.188), because "they are powerful and seductive" (p.203) and because "they are not entirely reducible to their context" (p15). The literature highlights that images can be considered from several perspectives: spatial organisation, semantics, depth and detail, and balance between visual and lexical content. This language can be daunting for researchers.

Overall, I took pragmatic advice from Rose (2001, p.150) who, drawing on wisdom from Tonkiss (1998) and Gill (1996), suggests approaching each image without preconceptions and viewing it with "fresh eyes", allowing one's findings to guide the investigation. Also following advice from Rose (2001) I took an immersive approach, re-visiting the images many times, noticing detail. Use of metaphor, key words and striking images were easier to note, but I also tried to notice what was not present in the maps, for example an absence of reference to mentors. Throughout, I was struck by how different the maps all were from each other and worried about how to do justice to the efforts that my research participants had put into creating them.

Studying each map as I received it, using post-its to avoid marking the maps, helped to inform prompts I might wish to provide during the interview that followed. An example of this pre-interview analysis is shown in Figure 3.1.
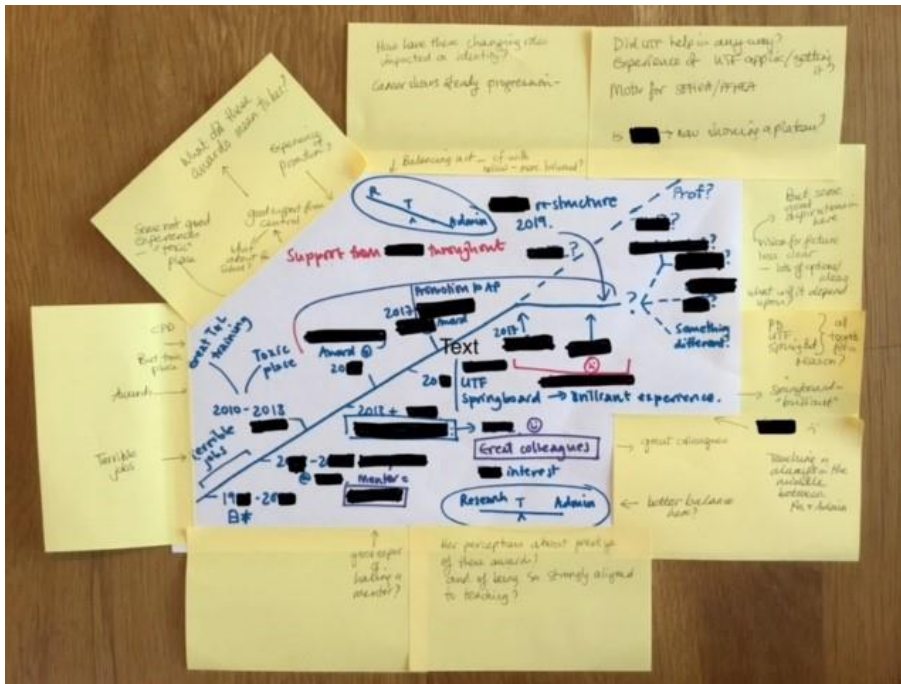
Figure 3.1 Photograph showing pre-interview analysis of Alison's career journey map

A second layer of career map analysis occurred during phase two and three of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework when coding the interview data, to both question and complement findings. Once I began analysis of the interviews, I viewed the career map and interview data as two parts of a whole.

3.6.2 Transcribing the interview data

Phase one of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to analysis is familiarisation of the data which in this case was through a process of listening, transcribing, reading and note-taking, as well as "repeated reading…in an active way" (p.87). I transcribed the interviews myself to facilitate early connection with the data, as advised by Braun and Clarke (2006, pp.87-88) who stress that transcription is an important "interpretive act" rather than a "mechanical act" of capturing the spoken word. A key step during transcription was to anonymise the data, removing any detail such as names that would enable identification. At this point, I used numbers 1-15 whilst I reflected upon appropriate pseudonyms, which I assigned later.

The literature highlights the complexities of transcription, not least in accurately representing oral discourse in written form. Gillham (2005, p.121) refers to transcription as "a form of translation" and Kvale (2007) reassures researchers there is no correct method, only the method which is most useful for the purposes of their research. My aim was to capture meaning as accurately as possible to support an accurate interpretation. For example, in addition to language, verbal features such as repetition, hesitations and pauses can be significant, as can non-verbal signals such as smiling or shrugging. I considered it essential to capture spoken features such as pauses, or which words were emphasised by the speaker, or where emotion was conveyed, but not to indicate the precise length of a pause beyond noting a "short pause" or "long pause". See Appendix D for transcription codes and two extracts of interview transcripts.

Where my schedule allowed, I transcribed and reflected upon each interview before the next, to promote learning from one to the next, as advised by Gillham (2005) and Floyd (2012) and to recall detail as clearly as possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In doing so I cumulatively built my understanding about likely sub-themes as well as developing my interview skills. Each MP3 audio file was converted to WAV format to enable the use of the Voice Walker transcription tool which aids the process of transcription by creating overlapping segments of audio. Whilst transcribing, I took handwritten notes in a notebook I kept beside me. The literature emphasises the importance of this note-taking and cross-referencing process and is the start of the process of identifying themes for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Floyd, 2012; Rapley, 2011). Rubin and Rubin (2005) emphasise the value of highlighting well-phrased quotations during this process, where certain pertinent comments can sum up hours of conversation and even seem to directly answer research questions. The final stage of the transcription process was to listen to each recording whilst reading each transcript for accuracy; this became both a checking process and an opportunity to reflect on sub-themes identified.

3.6.3 Analysing narrative interview data

Following phase one of analysis, I felt that the "repeated reading" advised by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) during phase one had not enabled me to feel sufficiently connected to the data, despite the helpful process of doing the transcription myself, and I needed to read,

think *and write* at the same time. As a result, I created a step somewhere between phase one and phase two of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, engaging in a time-consuming but necessary process of summarising each of the fifteen narrative interviews into notebooks, approximately 3,000 words per summary. At the end of each summary, I produced a list of potential sub-themes for each participant (Figure 3.2). Although I did not use the summary notebooks beyond this phase, mostly then working from the transcripts, this process of re-telling, of reading, writing and noting interesting quotations, differences and patterns, enabled me to feel completely immersed in and familiar with the data from then on.
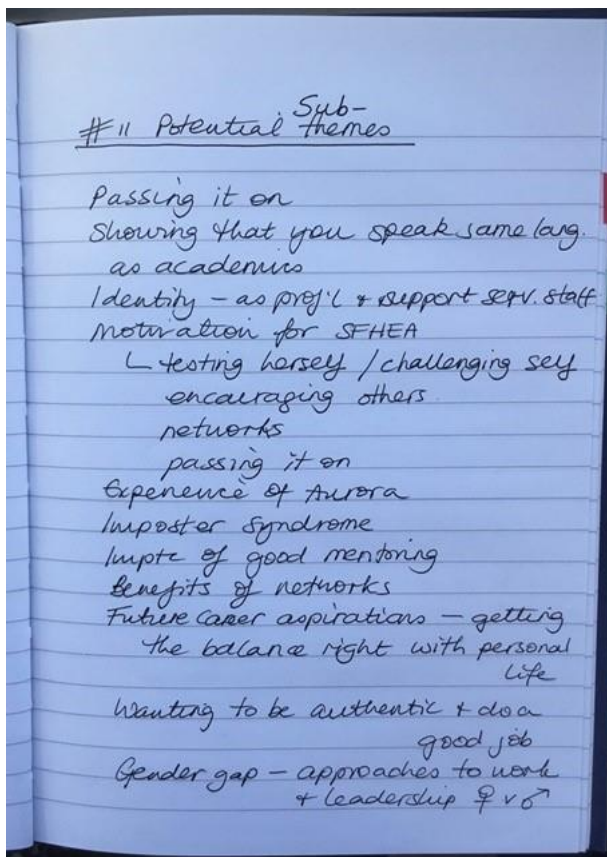
Figure 3.2 List of potential sub-themes identified after one of the summary accounts

Phase two of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for analysis is to engage in a close reading of each transcription, beginning to generate initial codes through a process of open coding by hand (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This process involved manually underlining, highlighting and making notes onto hardcopies of the transcripts whilst also capturing

overview thoughts in an accompanying notebook. Many of the codes consisted of phrases rather than words, for example, *"articulating achievements in T&L", "finding one's voice", "being useful"*, and as a result I conceptualised the codes as "labels" or "sub-themes" (Figure 3.3).
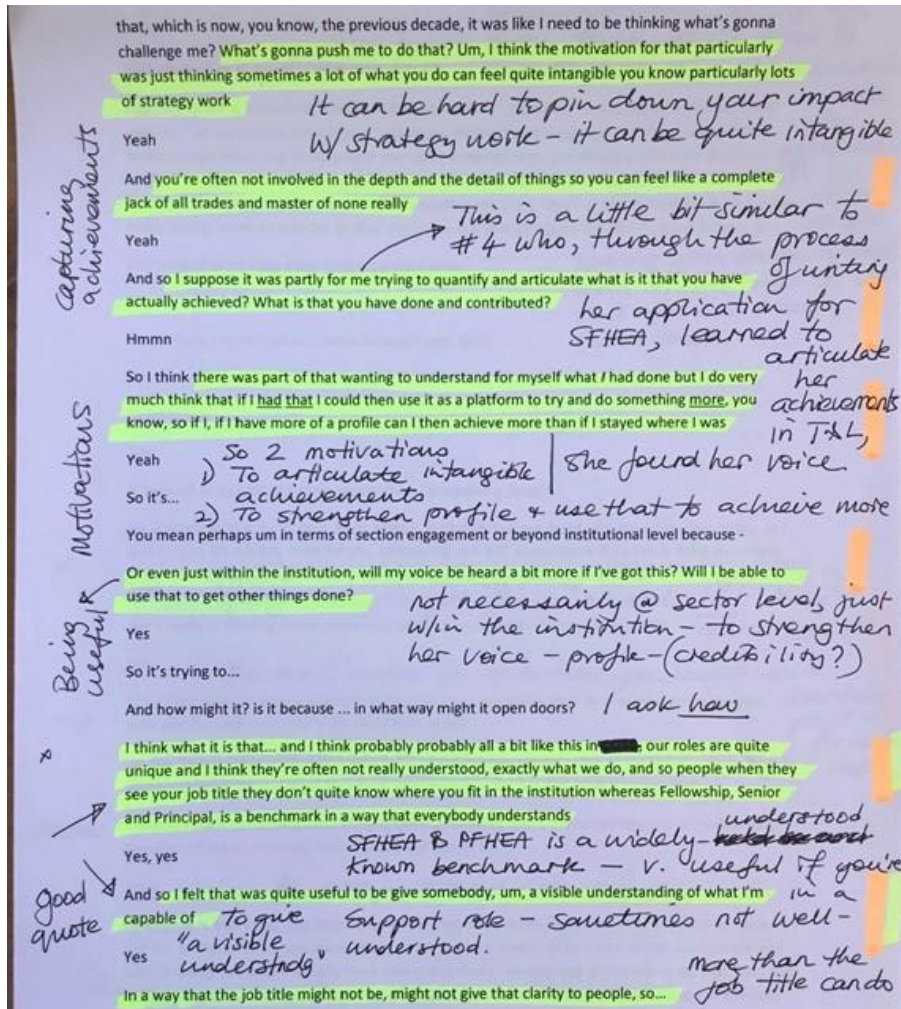
Figure 3.3 Photograph to show initial coding of sub-themes onto transcript

Phase three of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework is to start identifying themes amongst the codes, or sub-themes. During this stage I manually captured all the sub-themes onto small post-its and laid them out on large post-its to experiment with moving them around into clusters of themes. There were several versions of this thematic map: in the early stages of analysis I had identified forty-three sub-themes, which eventually expanded to forty-eight (Figure 3.4).
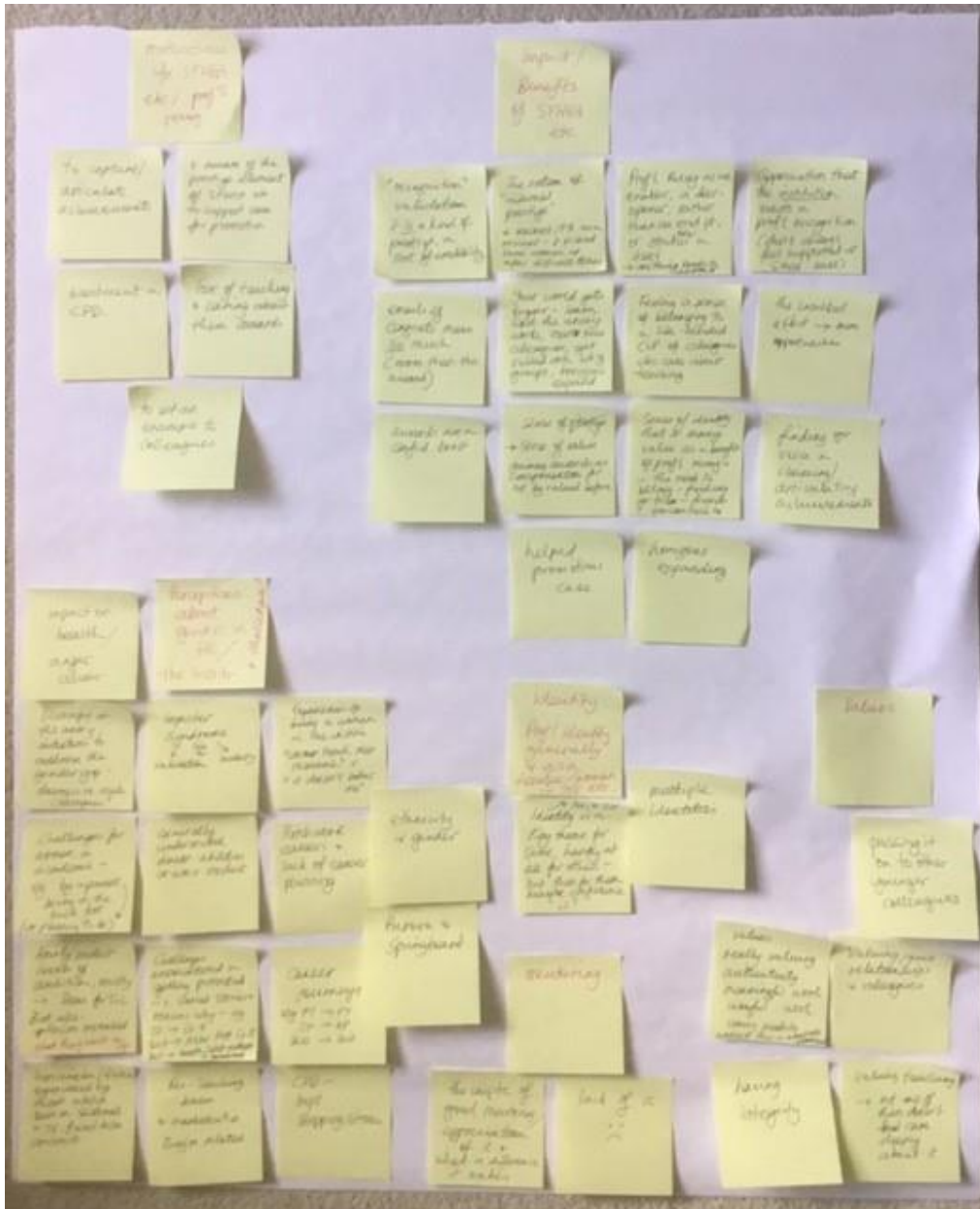
Figure 3.4 Photograph to show initial thematic wall map using post-its

By the end of phase three I had organised the sub-themes into seven main themes. Phase four of Braun and Clarke's six-step framework is to review themes. Firstly, I created a colour-code for the themes (Appendix E). I then returned once again to hardcopies of the transcripts and colour-coded all the pertinent quotations using highlighter pen markings in the margins. This process was completed swiftly but provided a reflective opportunity to review themes and sub-themes and to check nothing had been missed; it also meant each time I returned to the transcripts from then on, I could quickly identify themes.

Phase five of Braun and Clarke's (2006, p.92) framework is to define and name themes, in my case it was to refine the names of the themes and check the "'essence' of what each theme is about". To do this I manually created a large thematic wall-map which I could reflectively re-visit and refine and which helped me to finally pin down and control the overlap between themes. At this stage I also began to conceptualise the themes and sub-themes in relation to the three research questions, which I incorporated into the map (Figure 3.5).
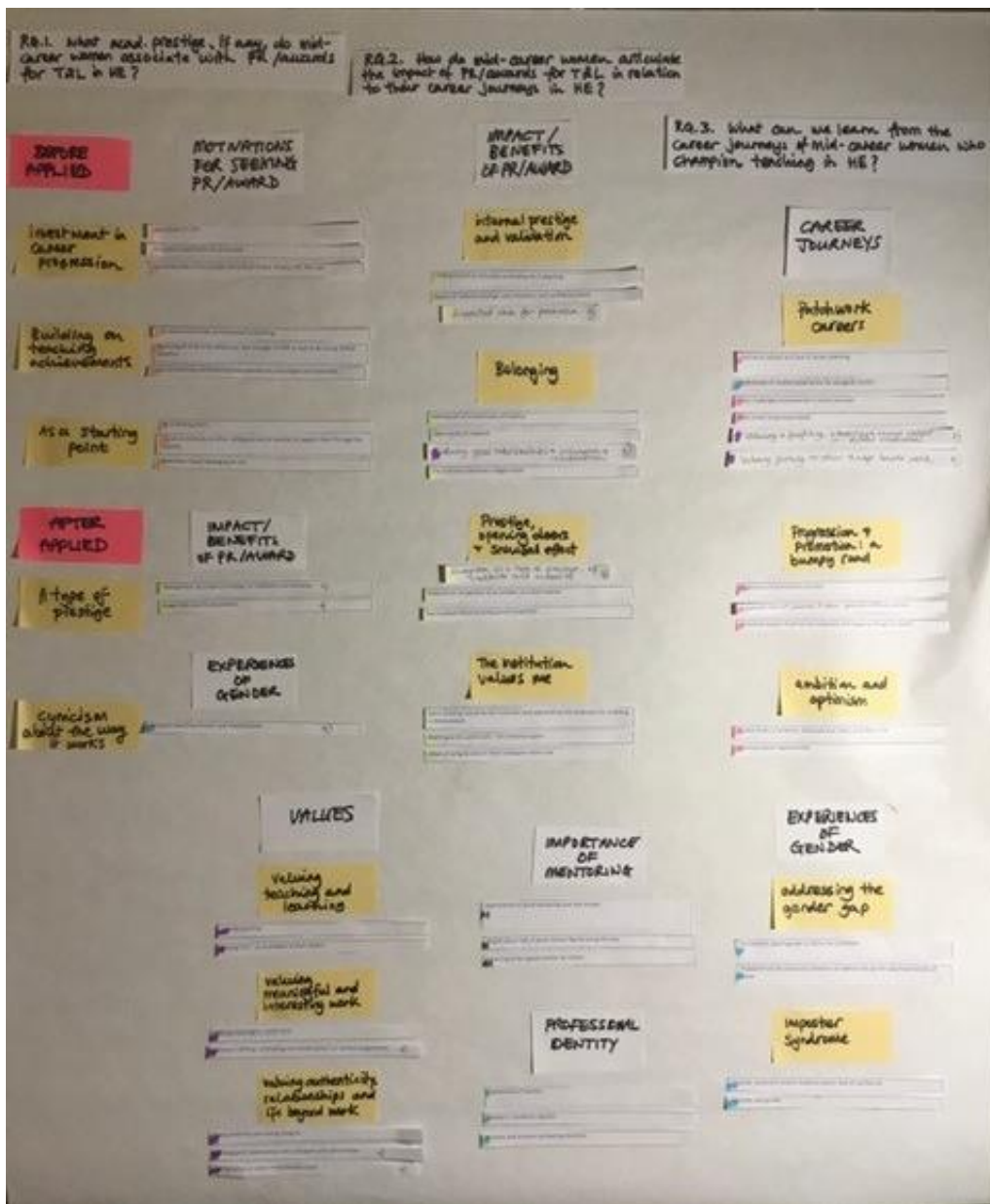
Figure 3.5 Thematic wall map showing themes, sub-themes and research questions

From these hand-drawn maps, I identified a final set of main themes and sub-themes (see below, Figure 3.6).

Career Journeys
Patchwork careers and lack of career planning
Experience of promotions process
Progression from Part-time/Sessional/Teaching Fellow Status
Other challenges encountered in career journeys
Emotional impact of perceived inequality and/or negative impact on health
Modest levels of ambition, balanced with other priorities in life
Optimism about opportunities
How career progression works
Gender related experiences
Perceptions about gender in HE/in the institution
Discomfort at the university initiatives to address the gender gap/experiences of these
Imposter syndrome and/or modesty and/or lack of confidence
Research-teaching tension and marketisation
Ethnicity and gender
Experiences of motherhood/family life alongside careers
Motivations for seeking professional recognition and award for T&L
Investment in CPD
To capture/articulate achievements in teaching
Awareness about the prestige element of SFHEA, PFHEA, UTF, NTF, etc
To support application for promotion
Love of teaching and believing these awards are meaningful and important
To set an example to other colleagues and/or support them through the process
Realisation about belonging to CoP
Encouraged to do it by others e.g. mentor, line manager, School directive
As a starting point
Impact and/or benefits of professional recognition and award for T&L
"Recognition" as a type of prestige, of credibility and authority
Notion of "internal prestige" and/or validation and/or confidence boost
Feeling part of a Community of Practice
Opportunity to network
Professional recognition as an enabler, as a door-opener
The snowball effect of professional recognition
The institution becomes a bigger place
Sense of being valued by and/or appreciating the institution for investing in these awards
Wanting to do useful work – the institution gains
Emails of congratulations from colleagues mean a lot
Finding a voice to articulate achievements in teaching
Supported case for promotion
Importance of mentoring
Appreciation of good mentoring and role models
Regret about lack of good mentor figures along the way
Wanting to be a good mentor for others

Professional identity
Expressions of identity
Teacher -v- academic identity
Multiple and at times competing identities
Values
Valuing good relationships and colleagues and collaboration
Valuing a fulfilling, interesting and varied career (-v- vertical progression)
Valuing meaningful, useful work
Valuing being authentic and having integrity
Valuing CPD – as a constant in their careers
Valuing teaching
Valuing family or other things besides work

Figure 3.6 Final set of main and sub-themes identified

I then re-produced the post-it thematic wall map with research questions (shown in Figure 3.5) as an electronic version in Word which I could access from my laptop regardless of location (Appendix F). Next, I gathered key participant quotations and my comments from all the colour-coded transcripts and captured these in seven separate Word documents, one for each of the main themes, divided by its sub-themes (see Appendix G for an extract). The lengthy process of reading, writing and thinking when creating these seven tables in Word provided an important space to reflect on findings prior to writing up results. The tables then acted as a condensed version of the data and an invaluable reference point during phase six of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for analysis, which is to write up results. A table capturing the stages of my thematic analysis in relation to Braun and Clarke's framework is shown in Appendix H.

3.7   Summary of the methodological approach

Prior to the final sections of this chapter covering ethical considerations, positionality and trustworthiness, a summary of this study's methodological approach is shown in Figure 3.7.

```
Feminist research
principles informed by
Interpretivism &
Standpoint theory
        ↓
Case study research
        ↓
Insider research
        ↓
Visual and Narrative
methods
   ↓              ↓
Career journey maps → Narrative interviews
   ↓              ↓
Thematic analysis drawing
on Braun & Clarke's
6-Step Framework
```
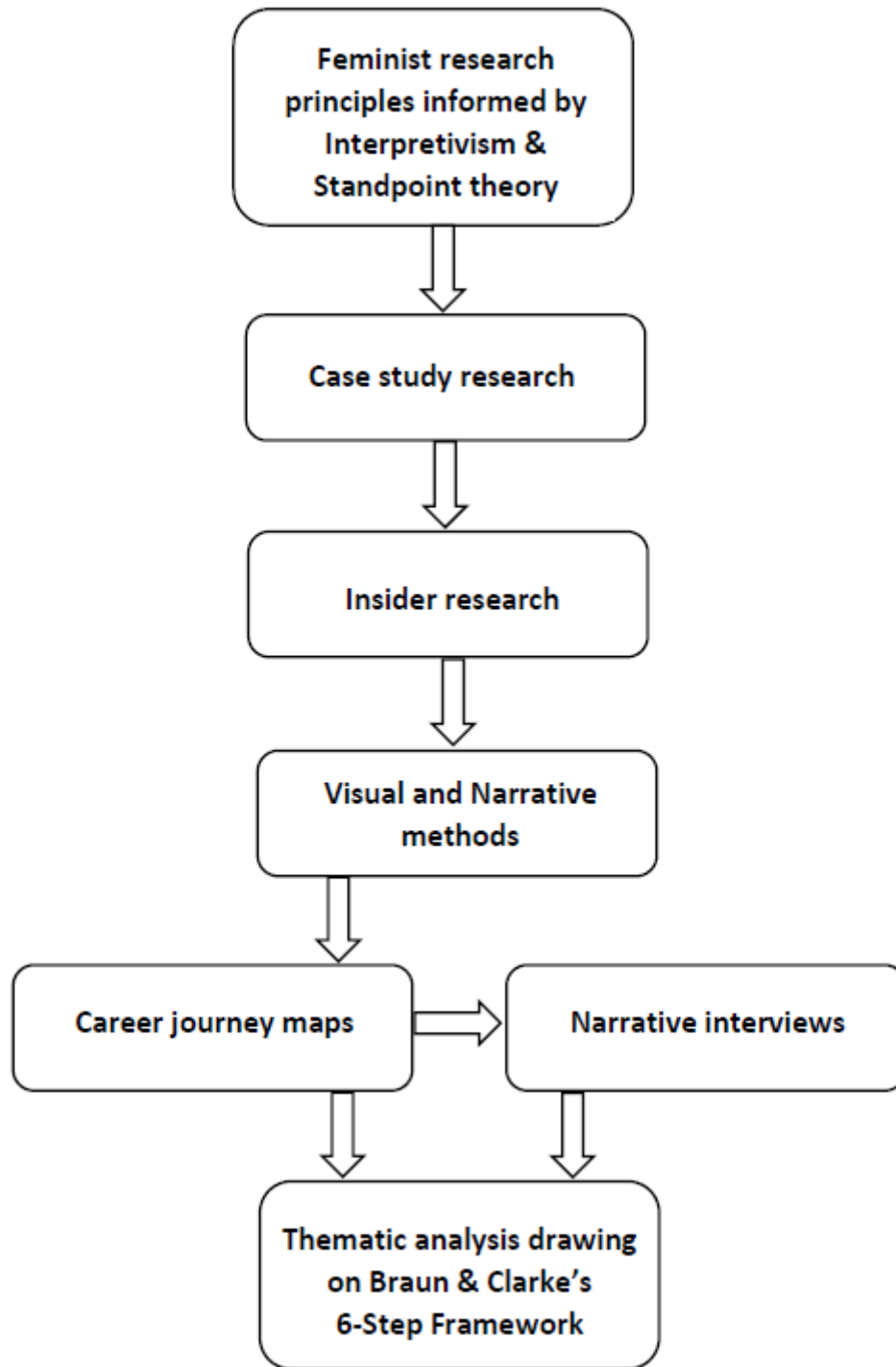
Figure 3.7 Summary of the methodological approach

3.8   Ethical considerations

Full ethical approval was obtained from the University of Reading Ethics Committee in May 2019 before the study commenced. The ethics forms are provided in Appendix A. Whilst

approval is granted by a committee, it is the researcher who holds "a duty of balance, fairness and thoroughness" (Thomas, 2013, p.110). A respect for ethics throughout the research process is especially emphasised in a feminist epistemology which holds that feminism is embedded in the what *and* the how of research (Bell, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2019). In feminist research ethics, particular attention is paid to consideration of power relationships and protecting the well-being of those who participate in the research, particularly vulnerable groups (Bell, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2019). Essential ethical considerations, such as informed consent and clarity about the right to withdraw at any stage of the research, can be seen reflected in the written information and consent sheets provided to participants (Appendices A).

One of my key ethical preoccupations throughout the process was "the anonymity problem" (Trowler, 2011, p.2). Ensuring confidentiality can be a heightened concern for insider researchers, not least because of the "small-world nature of academia" (Acker, 2000, p.4) which means colleagues both within the institution and even the sector can be easily identifiable. The participants in this research are successful, professional women; I work amongst them in the same HE institution. I understood throughout that their stories were real and did not end when I stopped recording and closed my notebook. As a result, I felt a high degree of responsibility to protect their identity. Their openness with me was related to their confidence that their anonymity would be protected, and my assurances to this effect were provided in person at the start of each interview as well as in the information sheet.

Some researchers use fictional techniques to re-work and distil narrative accounts into representational versions which can help to protect participants' anonymity (see Clayton & Coates, 2015; Harland & Pickering, 2011; Spowart & Turner, 2021). The benefit of using creative non-fiction, if used well, is that it can effectively safeguard participants' anonymity. However, a key disadvantage is that it relies on the researcher's skill to re-weave real accounts into fictionalised versions and my lack of experience in doing so meant I chose not to pursue this approach. Sending respondents drafts of research outputs is another technique suggested in the literature (Trowler, 2011). I was persuaded by Mercer (2007, p.12) that respondent validation is "a flawed method" and was also not something my respondents wished to do, having already placed their trust in me to ensure confidentiality.

However, on a few occasions I did contact respondents to check they were content with the way I was anonymising career map extracts.

I anonymised all data within all my documentation removing, from the start, any identifying details about individuals and the institution, initially replacing their names with numbers until I had settled on the pseudonyms I wished to use. Trowler (2011) suggests insider researchers might also wish to change small, but unique, details which do not alter the details of the research, "laying false trails in descriptions" (p.3) which I decided not to do. However, I did obscure certain details by not being as specific as I might be. For example, there are a relatively small number of Principal Fellows and National Teaching Fellows within the institution, and so I did not always refer to a specific category or type of fellowship. Some of the career map extracts I have included were re-drawn by me, in agreement with participants, for example where their handwriting was very distinctive.

At times the role of insider researcher felt highly constraining, and I realised I could not include some interesting observations and quotations without compromising anonymity. The career maps were particularly difficult to anonymise because so much of the detail was highly biographical and personal. My goal was to work with data which reflects an honest representation of views, but I also had to accept I could not always represent everything.

Power relations can be tricky in insider research (Fleming, 2018; Greene, 2014; Trowler, 2011), depending on one's position relative to the research participants within the institution. The support and trust extended to me by my research participants, and their willingness to take part in the research, encourages my belief that power dynamics did not have a major impact upon my research. Nevertheless, in interview situations the researcher can be perceived to be the authority with overall control, referred to as a "power asymmetry" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.37). My choice of a narrative approach may have been helpful; narrative interviews rather than structured or semi-structured interviews can support a power shift in interview situations which may reduce the power disparity (Riessman, 2008). My invitation to respondents to chart their career journey maps in their own time and space before the interview, which then shaped our discussions, may also have been helpful in sharing control. Overall, I was reassured by Jenkins et al., (2019) that it may

not be possible to fully equalise an inevitable power relationship between researchers and participants; I also took advice from Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) that eliminating power should not be the goal, instead researchers should reflect on and be aware of the role power might play in the production of research.

3.9 Positionality and reflexivity

Hellawell (2006, p.483) helpfully defines reflexivity as a type of purposeful "self-scrutiny" in relation to the research process and advises doctoral students to consider where they are on the outsider-insider continuum in relation to their research as a way of developing their reflexivity and understanding their positionality. As an insider researcher my research interacts with my life in multiple ways: as a mid-career woman in HE, as an academic developer, a teacher, a Senior Fellow and a University Teaching Fellow. Carrying out narrative research provides an opportunity for the researcher to explore what one can learn in these accounts about one's own story (Clough, 2002); it is also an underlying goal for feminist researchers to develop themselves, to "affirm women as expert knowers" (Jenkins et al., 2019, p.416). My research and my own professional understanding are evolving alongside each other and will continue to do so once my thesis is complete. In these ways, reflexive practice is embedded in my approach.

Being immersed in the research context is both acceptable and beneficial within an interpretivist and qualitative epistemology (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; May, 2011) and encouraged in feminist research contexts, including sharing one's own story within the process (Jenkins, 2019). I appreciate that my inside perspective and personal values and experience will influence what I notice and will shape my research findings (Fleming, 2018; Greene, 2014). However, in Gubrium and Holstein's words (2002, p.15), in qualitative research "neutrality is not figured to be necessary or even achievable"; feminist researchers likewise dismiss the notion that objectivity is attainable (Jenkins et al., 2019). Instead, awareness of and openness about positionality is the goal (Fleming, 2018; Greene, 2014), or as Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p.72) articulate it, insider researchers, "through a process of reflexivity, need to be aware of the strengths and limits of their preunderstandings".

My interest in the professional development and career progression of mid-career women in higher education is both personal and professional. As an academic developer on a professional services rather than academic contract, opportunities for promotion based on merit are limited, which has raised my awareness about the importance of other types of career-related prestige one can seek. It has meant a lot to me to receive alternative acknowledgement which celebrates my achievements, and I have recognised this same value placed on senior teaching fellowship awards by colleagues I have supported, especially women. The work I do supporting professional recognition and teaching awards at both institutional and sector level means it matters to me that applying for recognition is a meaningful process, and so I am aware I may look harder for evidence in this regard.

Meanwhile, as a woman researcher, I am likely to be empathetic to stories of struggle. Like many women in the sector, and in my institution, I have been confounded by the lack of women in senior leadership roles, I have experienced first-hand the institutional gender asbestos Wittenberg-Cox (2013) describes and I have reflected many times on my own hesitancy to "lean in" (Sandberg, 2013). I have felt challenged by similar conundrums as my research participants, torn between the conflicting demands of work and home life, sometimes constrained by imposter syndrome and baffled by the embedded confidence of many male colleagues. Although this position might lead to charges of being "too close" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007) I believe it also enabled me to develop "sensitising concepts" (Wegener, 2014) as a researcher and see what might be invisible to outsiders or male researchers.

3.10 Trustworthiness of the research

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is equivalent to the goals of validity, reliability and objectivity referred to in more traditional and positivist research paradigms (Creswell, 2013a). A frequent question raised about insider research is whether it can be considered reliable and valid because it lacks the objectivity deemed necessary in more traditional approaches to research due to the researchers being too close to their subjects (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007) resulting in researcher bias and even informant bias (Fleming, 2018; Trowler, 2011). Greene (2014, p.4) urges insider researchers not to fear bias but to view it as

a source of insight, as long as they are aware of the potential for bias to "creep in". Fleming (2018, p.319) more emphatically encourages insider researchers to "put aside the arguments from the positivist perspective of objectivity and to use their strength as an insider to conduct research which addresses questions and develops knowledge within their own unique contexts". As Brannick and Coghlan (2007, p.72) state, insider research "is not only valid and useful but also provides important knowledge about what organisations are really like".

Despite the challenges, researching from the inside gave me confidence as a researcher, for example familiarity with my participants' context, sharing a work culture and language, was extremely helpful, a point which is echoed in the literature. Mercer (2007, p.7) suggests that insider researchers may have more credibility and rapport with participants resulting in greater level of openness during interviews. Morrison (2012) believes insider researchers are more able to empathise and Green (2014) refers to a more natural interaction between researcher and respondents, resulting in a more honest reporting of the data. For Fleming (2018) the insider researcher's pre-understandings support the process of analysis and interpretation of data.

From the start, as outlined in my research design, underpinned by feminist research values, standpoint theory and informed by postmodernism, I have been clear that narrative research draws on a version of truth which is both subjective and contextualised. For Clough (2002, p.17) the central purpose of using narrative story telling in educational research is to "tell the truth as one sees it". I believe that interpretation of texts and images "is just that, interpretation, not the discovery of their truth" (Rose, 2001, p.2). Questions might be asked about whether respondents have remembered details accurately, or whether their inherent bias might minimise or exaggerate certain aspects of their story (Floyd, 2012). This is to misinterpret the nature and purpose of narrative inquiry about human lives in which standard tests of reliability, validity and replicability are neither appropriate nor suitable (Clough, 2002; Floyd, 2012; Reissman, 2008). It is also to ignore that narrative inquiry is a co-construction where participant and researcher are both reflected in the outcomes (Reissman, 2008). Narrative inquiry is never a factual report, but an articulation of experiences and events told from a perspective that may persuade others to see things

similarly, and verifying facts is less important than understanding meaning for individuals and groups (Reissman, 2008). As suggested by Reissman (2008, p.185), "the validity of a project should be assessed from within the situated perspective and traditions that frame it". I am content that, during the telling by participants in the research, it was their truth, told to me through their voice.

Rather than seeking objectivity, reliability and validity in the positivist tradition, I am committed to ensuring that my research is transparent, credible and transferable, and that bias is controlled wherever possible (Kumar, 2011; G. Thomas, 2013). I sought to achieve this by, for example, ensuring that my research paradigm, methods and questions were aligned, by including an additional data source, drawing on multiple narrative interviews and asking questions in a safe space with trust about anonymity to increase the chance of honest responses. I worked in a methodical manner, I audio recorded all interview data to ensure accurate use of quotations, I kept notes and took photos throughout the process of paper-based analysis, and practised reflexivity (Reissman, 2008). To avoid being over familiar with the subject matter, I followed advice to "make the familiar strange" (Delamont et al., 2010), examining the data with a critical eye during analysis, considering alternative interpretations and not resting on assumptions. In this way, I was confident as an insider researcher that "credible and trustworthy research can be achieved" (Fleming, 2018, p.320).

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the research design, framework and methods chosen to address the three research questions at the heart of this study. It has set out the position of the researcher and provided a detailed insight into the methods used for data collection and analysis. Importantly, it has shown how the research design chosen, employing insider research and narrative methods, are aligned to feminist research values. Ethical considerations including confidentiality, and questions about trust, reliability and validity are also addressed. The following chapters report on the findings from the research, with Chapter 4 introducing the findings, and Chapters 5, 6 and 7 each presenting the findings for one of the three research questions.

Chapter 4 Findings: Introduction and overview

4.1 Introduction to Chapters 4, 5 and 6 about findings

The following three chapters, 5, 6 and 7, present the findings from analysis of the data. This short chapter introduces all three chapters including a summary of the purpose, methods used, how the research questions and chapters are organised, and an outline of themes covered in each.

4.1.1 Summary of research purpose

One of the starting points for this research was to explore whether the high number of women in the institution applying for HEA Senior and Principal Fellowship, National Teaching Fellowship and University Teaching Fellowship was driven by an interest in accruing academic prestige. Academic prestige has recently been examined through a gendered lens, described as a type of currency more easily attained by male academics in a masculinised culture which rewards research outputs such as grant income, high status publications and international keynotes over teaching excellence (see Chapter 2).

In a research-intensive institution where the majority of part-time and teaching intensive roles are held by women, and the focus on teaching quality is of increasing strategic and economic importance within the sector, this research explores whether women may be harnessing their achievements in teaching to access a prestige economy from which they may previously have felt excluded. Although this was the focus of the research, it was also necessary, in alignment with narrative and feminist research methods, to take a contextualised approach to the study, which is why women's broader career experiences were also explored.

4.1.2 Summary of the study itself

The research, which is qualitative in nature, takes a feminist, interpretivist, case study approach which is rooted in standpoint theory. It draws on insider research, visual and narrative methods to enable the women participants who are teaching champions in their institution to tell their career stories in their own words. Each of the fifteen women who

took part were invited to draw a map representing their career journey including attention to their Teaching Fellowships. The maps provided both a starting point and focus for the narrative interviews which followed. The individual nature of each woman's career journey and the visual and narrative approach taken meant the women were free to elaborate on aspects of their journey which they most wished to reflect upon and share details of.

4.1.3 Summary of methods

As was outlined in detail in Chapter 3, a data driven and inductive process was adopted during analysis, drawing upon an adapted version of Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for thematic analysis, resulting in a set of 48 sub-themes (Figure 3.6) which were categorised under seven overarching themes:

- Career journeys
- Gender related experiences
- Motivations for seeking senior categories of teaching fellowships
- Impact and/or benefits of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships
- Importance of mentoring
- Professional identity
- Values

4.1.4 Organisation of findings chapters

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 each draw upon relevant themes and sub-themes identified during analysis to address one of the three research questions. Each chapter is organised into sections; to aid structure and clarity, some sections are further divided with additional headings. An introductory section and a conclusion are provided for all three chapters.

Chapter 5 addresses the first research question:

RQ1:   What can we learn from the career journeys of mid-career women who champion teaching in higher education?

The chapter draws upon both interview and career journey map data to present a holistic overview of the women's career journeys and experiences. Addressing the research questions about prestige and teaching fellowships in the broader context of women's career stories is aligned with both narrative and feminist research methods in which context is always relevant. This first research question was also necessary because concepts such as prestige and recognition are quite abstract and so only become meaningful when considered in relation to real-life experiences, for example about professional development or promotion.

The findings here therefore provide helpful foregrounding to the themes which are explored in Chapters 6 and 7 in relation to the second and third research questions about prestige and impact of senior categories of teaching fellowships. Given its role in contextualising the findings for Chapter 6 and 7, Chapter 5 covers a wide range of career-related themes, including: patchwork career journeys, family and caring responsibilities, progression and promotion, perceptions of gender in the institution, professional development programmes for women, the differing status afforded teaching and research, confidence, mentoring, professional identity and values.

Chapter 6 addresses the second research question:

RQ2:   What prestige, if any, do mid-career women associate with senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

Chapter 6 draws upon interview data to explore perceptions of prestige in relation to women applying for and achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships. To address this second research question, women's motivations for seeking their new teaching status and their notions about prestige were explored. This includes attitudes to continuing professional development and promotion, the role of others and perceptions of status and belonging within the institution.

Chapter 7 addresses the third research question:

RQ3:   How do mid-career women articulate the impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

Chapter 7 draws upon interview data to explore the impact and benefits for the women of achieving their new teaching status, still bearing in mind factors relating to prestige. This chapter re-visits some themes which are evident throughout the findings, such as confidence, belonging, feeling valued and wanting to do useful work, and explores the notion of both internal and external prestige.

4.1.5 A few words about extracts from the data

Please see Section 3.6.2 for details about anonymisation of data and the transcription process and Appendix D for a transcription key and two extracts from the interview transcripts. In all three findings chapters, direct quotations from the interview data are presented in italics. Where they are less than two lines in length, quotations are embedded within paragraphs; longer quotations are indented. It should be noted that over time some of the women have achieved more than one type and/or category of senior teaching fellowship; however, the timings of these, their motivations for and experiences of each are often different, which may be reflected in the quotations included. As an additional layer of anonymisation the actual award being referred to is not always specified, instead providing *[award]* as a substitution. Please see Section 3.8 about the challenges of working with and anonymising visual data which is infused with personal names, dates and places. All career map data and extracts are presented as Figures.

Chapter 5 About women's career journeys: findings for RQ1

5.1 Introduction to findings about women's career journeys in HE

This chapter presents findings from the interview data and career journey maps analysed from the fifteen accounts of the women who took part in the research in relation to the first research question for this study which takes a holistic look at their career experiences:

RQ1:   What can we learn from the career journeys of mid-career women who champion teaching in higher education?

In addressing this first research question, the sub-themes belonging to the following overarching themes were relevant (see Figure 3.6 for a full list of themes and sub-themes):

- Career journeys
- Gender related experiences
- Importance of mentoring
- Professional identity
- Values

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 Patchwork careers and lack of planning

The maps and interviews capture many 'turns' in the women's career paths, with over half of them providing clear examples of the 'kaleidoscope careers' (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), 'frayed' or 'patchwork careers' (Sabelis & Schilling, 2013) described in the literature. The patchwork nature of these careers was clearly reflected in the complexity of some of the career journey maps, as illustrated in the two example maps shown in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 below.
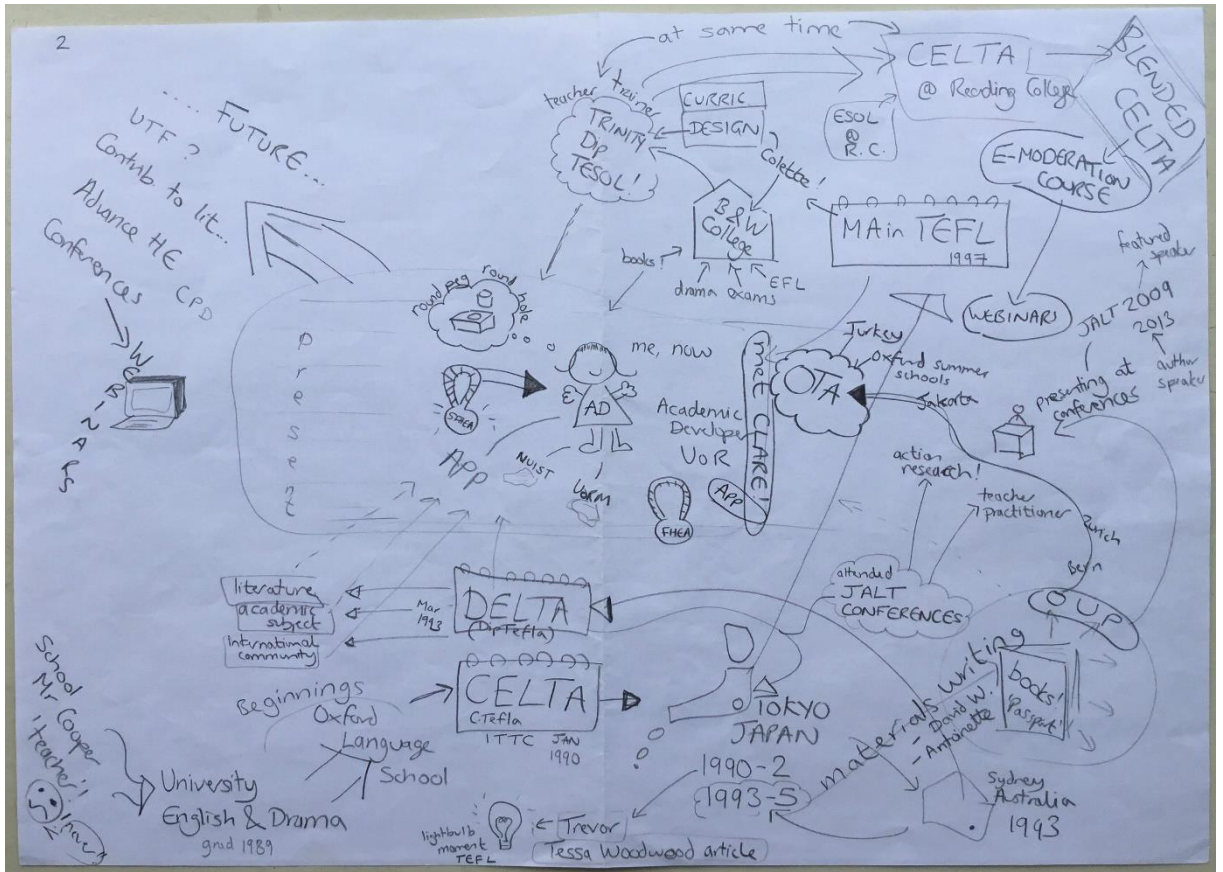
Figure 5.1 Tessa's career journey map
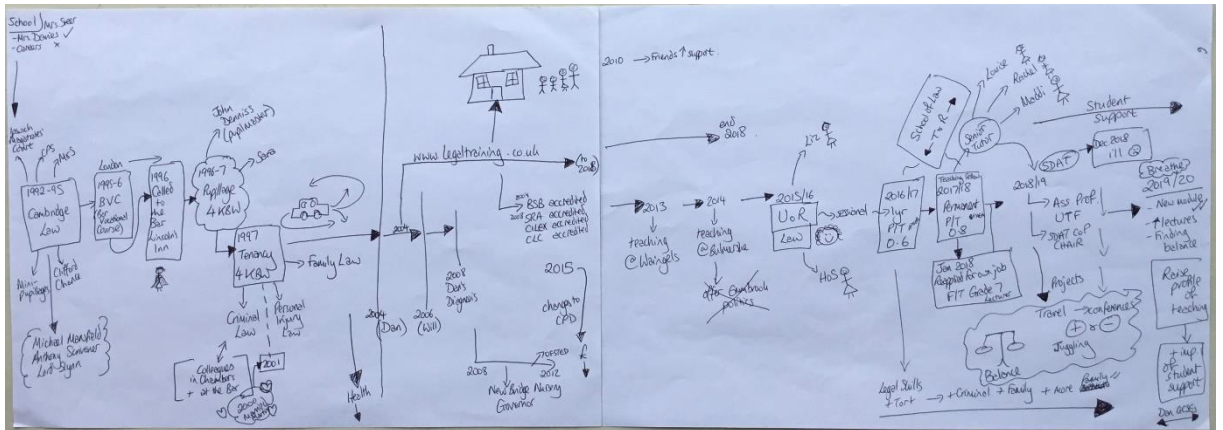
Figure 5.2 Emma's career journey map

The reasons the women experienced patchwork careers included coping with challenges such as: juggling motherhood alongside working, especially working part-time; straddling a career between industry and academia; coping with immigration obstacles and constraints; becoming caught in a cycle of part-time work and trying to maintain more than one career

option to ensure security. In contrast to university rhetoric about equal opportunities and about valuing real-life professional practice and the provision of a contextual statement on promotion submissions, the perception from some women was that (often male) traditional academics *"who've gone very linearly from degree, study and into the job"* fared better in the institution, which was a source of frustration: *"how can they be so, paid so, how can <u>they</u> have so much more to offer?"* (Donna). A patchwork career full of varied experiences may be interesting for women to reflect back on once a position of security has been attained, but it can also work against them: *"you know that richness doesn't […] like on the CV it looks like, unfocused, unreliable… it doesn't look good on paper"* (Donna).

5.2.2 Family and caring responsibilities

Motherhood and careers

The women referred to a range of challenges encountered during their career journeys including personal stories of being bullied, moving countries, culture clashes and becoming embroiled in re-structuring and closures within the institution. Whilst there is not space in this thesis to explore all of these individual experiences, the most common challenge referred to was motherhood in academia. Eight of the fifteen women were or had been working mothers. The challenges experienced by working mothers are highlighted in the literature (Huppatz et al., 2018; Misra et al., 2012) and the women, too, referred to obstacles they faced in building and sustaining a career in HE. During the interviews these obstacles were often accepted as simply part of being a woman in HE and their comments under this theme were at times quite casually included. These included the difficulties of "finding a balance" between work and home life, of always "juggling", of feeling less mobile in the job market, of realising that childcare would not be shared equally with their partner as they had anticipated and of coping with guilt whatever one's choices were. The seriousness ranged from laughing about the constant "juggling", to one of the women realising that in the early days of struggling with motherhood and work and pretending that everything was alright, she had suffered a break down.

The struggle to balance work and home responsibilities was also captured in the career journey maps, both literally and figuratively, as illustrated in Figure 5.3 in words, and in Figure 5.4 using scales as a symbol.
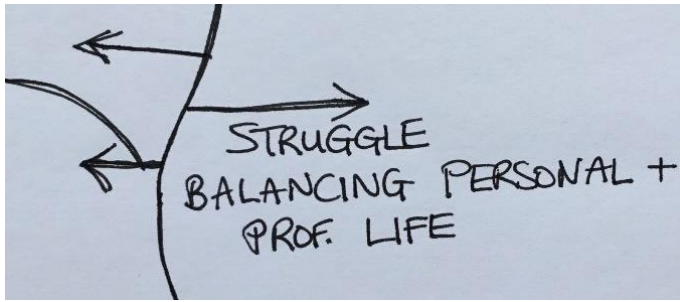
Figure 5.3 Career map extract noting Nicole's struggle to balance work and home life

Figure 5.4 Career map extract depicting Emma's struggle to balance work and home life

The women referred to the negative impact on their careers as working mothers in academia, which included: struggling to stay abreast of research and publication targets, not being able to use the weekends and holidays to write and missing out on conferences away from home: *"the real killer for me was conferences"* (Emma). Alison described having to cut her maternity leave short or else forfeit a research grant which she believed could easily have been extended: *"I always felt that was a terrible thing to do to someone at the start of their career"*. Research, publications and conference presentations are precisely the type of activities which result in prestige and support promotion cases, and yet these are the areas identified by working mothers as being extremely difficult for them. Juliet stated: *"each baby a woman has… costs her one book… so you give birth to the baby rather than the book… but there is no cost to the man"*. Figure 5.5 below shows an extract from Juliet's career map which describes the baby years as *"running to stand still"*:
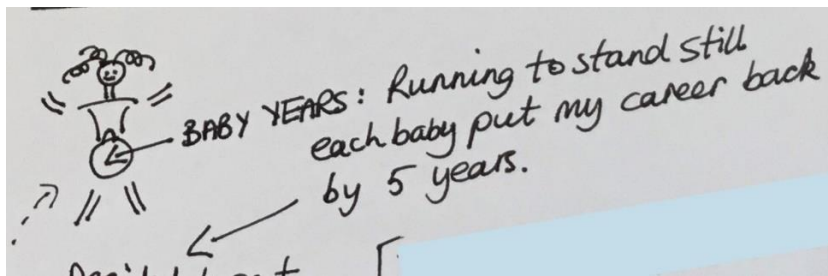
Figure 5.5 Career map extract for Juliet depicting impact of baby years

Alison concluded that, despite more flexible working arrangements, *"it still feels like in academia that you can't be a researcher and a parent successfully"* although, she conceded, *"there are some exceptions"*. Comments reveal that for some, the decision about whether to become a mother or not was a dilemma. Isabel could not help but notice that *"the second you have the family, you are on the back foot, you lose a lot of time"* and she wondered whether to make this career sacrifice herself: *"having seen all of my female colleagues disadvantaged from going for stuff the second they have children and they're part time"*.

A level of pragmatism was also evidenced, of knowing how to cope and to stay employed, particularly during the early years of motherhood: *"during this period I was kind of working myself in to be somebody who was needed…"* (Barbara). For some women, simply coping during those years was more important than promotion: *"and you do whatever it is to survive, so you, you do the teaching – you don't think, you know, career progression, you don't think of that"* (Nicole). Tessa referred to a time when she was juggling multiple part-time roles and simply securing a permanent job was a success: *"getting the job at the university was… it wasn't so much as, seeing it as a progression it was just like, such a relief, to have a permanent contract"*.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges, there was positivity too; several of the women reflected on how much better things were for working mothers now compared to some years ago, with the institution offering more flexible and family friendly policies. For some, it made working possible, as Emma said: *"the flexible working is huge… that's the only reason I can do this"*. Emma's comment highlights that the institution benefits too, being able to employ women with passion and commitment: *"[without flexible working] I would have to*

give up the job… and I would <u>hate</u> that cos I <u>love</u> the job" (Emma)*.* This vital flexibility also extended to men, with new paternity arrangements in the institution. Here too, there were benefits for the institution, as Penny identified, adding that the new *"work life balance thing"* in her School was *"so important… because if staff aren't stressed they can do their work so much better"*.

Family responsibilities and careers

The women provided insights into family and caring responsibilities other than children and how these also impacted career plans. Examples provided during interviews included not wanting to move away from elderly parents or finding that illness of a partner leads to a re-assessment of priorities and career ambitions. The way in which many women were not entirely free to shape their career paths because they also factored in their family context, was interestingly captured in Barbara's map in Figure 5.6 below. Although much of Barbara's map has been redacted to protect her identity, the remaining detail reveals the way in which she divided her career timeline into sections, identifying periods when she was free to make *"my choices"* and times when she had been *"constrained"* by family responsibilities. It is noteworthy that she identified the time when she *was* free of responsibility to make her own choices as a time which also allowed space for her *"ambitious period"*. The circles are added to highlight Barbara's annotations:
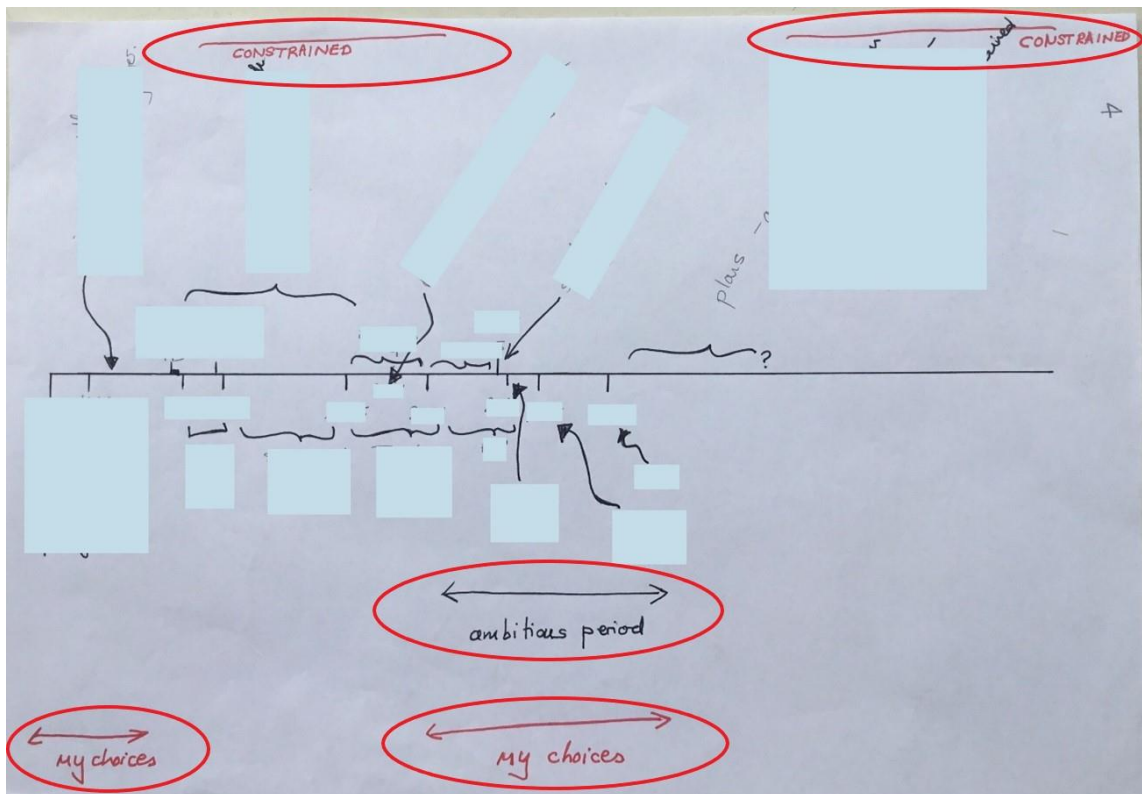
Figure 5.6 Career map for Barbara identifying freedom to make career choices

5.2.3 Progression and promotion

Two thirds of the fifteen women reflected on their experiences of promotion at the institution. Overall, the institution did not fare well in these anecdotes which covered perceptions of gender inequality, panels lacking diversity, contradictory feedback and a lack of transparency about what panels were seeking. These issues relate to notions of prestige and a culture where research is more highly valued than teaching.

Teaching was not something you were promoted for

The criteria for promotion underwent significant enhancement by the institution only three years before this research took place, which means that many of the women drew on experiences of the previous process. The changes were introduced to provide greater clarity for panel members and applicants about teaching excellence, and to ensure better equity in a system which favoured those with a research rather than a teaching profile. There was

frustration at how inscrutable and unfair the 'old' system was, which for some led to repeated attempts at promotion and a sense that the criteria were always changing. This was alongside an embedded problem, related to prestige, whereby teaching was simply not valued as much as research, so that *"they didn't think that teaching was something that you should be promoted for"* (Nicole).

The women appreciated that the promotions process had recently undergone significant improvement by the institution: *"there's a proper form, there's proper procedures"* (Penny) and *"it's so much clearer now [...] and also there's more support, there are mentors, and there's a more open culture"* (Nicole). However, it is also important to highlight that some of the poor experiences told to me were recent, occurring since the process had been revised, indicating there is work still to be done by the institution.

Promotion and gender

Five of the women provided accounts of the way in which gender played a part in their experience of the promotions process. Emma discovered that out of four Teaching Fellows applying to become permanent, the two male Teaching Fellows in her group were already on a grade above her and her female colleague, despite having the same role: *"that kind of rankles a little bit when you discover that"*. Donna failed promotion a number of times but observed male colleagues who were younger than her and with less experience be successfully promoted. She identified a complex web of prejudices she believed worked against her:

> *I'm a woman and I look really young and I did my PhD later in life and I changed between roles and I've changed countries a few times, so all of this exacerbates into this big bundle of [...] of obstacles to being able to... grow* (Donna).

Isabel was concerned about the make-up of her promotions panel *"and I remember using the phrase 'but the committee is full of old white men'"*. Meanwhile, Penny's experience identified the need for diversity to be extended beyond panels alone, it was needed throughout the process. Having failed a promotion she had assumed would go through, Penny said:

"all the way through the whole process, um, I had not had any input from any women into my application, not from the [...] Head of School, the Director of Teaching and Learning, um, mentors, um, people who'd looked at my application, everyone had been a man" (Penny).

Somewhat ironically, the person in senior leadership who she was sent to discuss her complaint with *"was another man",* but she was sanguine about this and said he helped her, *"just to deal with the disappointment"*.

Fiona's experience related to gender in more subtle ways and was about confidence and modesty, which are addressed again in Section 5.2.7. After an unsuccessful application she received feedback that she had underplayed her achievements compared to a male colleague who was the other candidate from her School. As a result, Fiona was told, her male colleague was successful even though *"it was known that he hadn't done as much as I had"*. Similarly, Isabel said, *"one of the people when I didn't get through promotion said to me 'oh if you were a man, you'd have written it differently'"*.

Isabel experienced a catalogue of disappointments, including her School reneging on previously made agreements in relation to the timing of her promotion, contradictory feedback before and after her submission, and observing male colleagues sail through. When she was finally promoted, she explained in her interview, it felt less prestigious and lessened her sense of achievement. Figure 5.7 below shows an extract from her map where she also captured this:
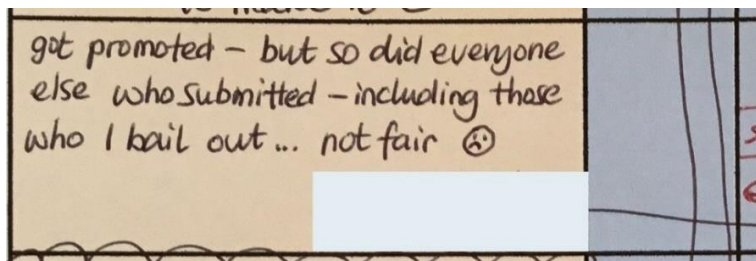
Figure 5.7 Career map extract for Isabel capturing response to promotion

Some of the women expressed uncertainty about whether to appeal against perceived inequality or unfairness. Juliet believed the institution had created barriers *"that discourage you from making a fuss about a range of things and if you're sensible, don't"*. When Emma discovered the disparity in grades between her and her two male colleagues despite having the same roles and doing the same work, she pondered: *"and then you have to decide, do you rock the boat? […] What do you do?"*. When Isabel's promotion was unsuccessful, the person giving her feedback admitted *"it's a bit of a joke"* that she did not get through, but she was encouraged not to make a fuss: "*I was advised not to bother […], it would be wasted effort, no appeals ever get through"*.

In contrast, Kate did channel her anger into an appeal, following what she believed was poor advice about whether she should apply for promotion through an academic or professional services contract. At the time, she said, "*I was <u>absolutely</u> livid, I was <u>so</u> livid [laughs]* and she described writing *"a fairly steaming email".* The result of her appeal was an acceptable compromise and her approach by this point was pragmatic rather than angry: "*I thought well you know, that's as good an outcome as you're going to get […] well, you've got to get on with it haven't you?".*

Progression from part-time and fixed term teaching contracts

A third of the women interviewed reflected on difficulties faced when trying to progress from part-time, fixed term and the especially restrictive Teaching Fellow teaching contracts in HE, for example seeking to be re-graded or to secure a permanent position. This theme is particularly relevant to women as they hold more of the part-time and teaching-intensive roles in HE, as outlined in the introduction and literature review.

Two of the women who had successfully transitioned from a Teaching Fellow role to a permanent TI academic contract felt lucky but reflected on an uneasy progression route. Charlotte described the frustrations of previously doing work as a Teaching Fellow which she perceived to be aligned to one or two grades higher. She also provided insights into the stresses of life on a fixed term contract:

you know, I… was on this short-term contract that would finish… you were always
counting down, um and so that was horrible, cos then you couldn't plan to buy a house,
all those sorts of things, you couldn't really plan for anything, so you always had one
eye on the job market (Charlotte)*.*

The fact that the institution did not (at the time of collecting the data) have a formal progression route for Teaching Fellows resulted in a lack of institutional clarity about processes to follow. For Charlotte, her experience was therefore protracted and *"was tricky"*. For Emma the transition was controversial within her School with accusations from some colleagues that *"you weren't appointed in the normal way"*.

Louise shed light on the cruelty of a teaching contract from which there was no formal progression route. Having spent too many years as a Teaching Fellow sitting at the top of her grade on the same salary, she pushed for two discretionary points. Her application was successful, but she said: *"for all those years, so I've now got two discretionary points but I'm still on [the grade below a lecturer] with still no progression route"*. The absence of options open to her was frustrating: *"I just want a path"*.

The findings indicate that for many women in part-time teaching roles in HE, resilience is required. Looking back at an arduous path from part-time teaching to a permanent position and ultimately promotion, Donna said *"it shouldn't have to be so hard… it is tiring"*. Charlotte admitted this period was *"a low point"* in her career. Emma had a very supportive Head of School but even so, she described the feeling when she started as a sessional as being *"kind of out on the fringe […] and your value is lower"*. Charlotte adopted a strategic and ambitious approach, not worrying that some colleagues accused her of being *"really greedy"* by applying for promotion so soon after securing a permanent contract. Emma also set about doing everything possible to further her chances: *"you know you start to put your feelers out… and it's like roots of a tree"*.

As the findings here illustrate, the women reflecting on this theme provided a mixed picture, but part-time teaching contracts offer important flexibility to women with other responsibilities. Barbara spoke positively and appreciatively about the years she progressed from being a sessional lecturer to a part-time lecturer prior to achieving a permanent

contract and then promotions. She felt respected by her colleagues and line managers and, like others, she took a strategic and pragmatic approach, "*I knew what I was doing and I could adapt quite well… [to be]… somebody that was needed here*".

Impact on health and wellbeing

A third of the women shared details about the impact of work on their health and well-being, particularly resulting from the frustrations of perceived inequality or unfair treatment during the promotions process. Some of the comments revealed that behind the brave faces pretending that everything was alright, there was a great deal of suffering. Louise described the repeated annual contracts as "soul destroying" and Donna admitted that *"I'm not at peace yet"* over inequalities experienced. Nicole said that the pressure it put her under *"takes its toll"*. When asked how Juliet got through a period of being bullied which she said took her to a *"very, very low point",* she replied, *"well um… [laughs] a lot of medication […] I don't know […] digging deep and holding on"*. Penny had assumed, after many obstacles to being permitted to submit a case for promotion, that her application would go through without any problem and was caught off guard when it was not successful. She explained: *"in fact I was off the scale upset by it […] in fact it was so bad that it set off a medical condition that I had overcome […] and I was really, really upset about that"*.

5.2.4 Perceptions of gender in HE/the institution

The women shared a range of perceptions of gender in the institution; in doing so they demonstrated awareness that gender is complex, drawing on personal experience to raise questions as well as to make suggestions. For example, Heather highlighted the difficulty of trying to untangle gender related questions when she said, *"and because I'm always looking at things through the eyes of a women, I don't know, it's really hard to tease out sometimes, isn't it?".*

Some of the women had personally experienced the frustrations of gender inequality in the institution, yet still framed their observations in an optimistic light. Whilst Emma acknowledged that *"the upper echelons are very white, grey male, if you look at senate",* she accepted this as a sort of normal, *"and that's the same wherever you go".* Overall though, she believed the institution provided a positive environment for women: "*I think it [the*

institution] is very sort of egalitarian in the sense of, you know, women do progress with lots of lovely female teaching and learning deans". Seeing women in leadership roles also proved inspirational for Tessa who was the most unequivocally positive about being a woman in the institution and regarded it as a place of opportunity:

> *there are <u>so</u> many female role models who for me have broken the glass ceiling I mean you look at our T&L Deans and they're all females, and it, it's a really liberating place you know, [...] but I, I think in the university it's, it's, it's fabulous, I feel like you know there's a lot of really good women about* (Tessa)*.

Some women were clear that they had never felt personally disadvantaged or constrained as women in terms of their career progression within the institution. Even so, they were aware of the gender gap that existed. As Charlotte said: *"it almost feels like the <u>men</u> do the research, the hard-core research and the <u>women</u> do the teaching, um, which is not the case"*. Fiona acknowledged her more positive experience had perhaps been shaped by working in a discipline with lots of women. However, she still observed that *"to get promoted to higher levels, a woman is definitely at a disadvantage [...] based on what I see"*. When asked why this was, her answer referred to both power dynamics and the leadership pipeline:

> *Hmmn… [pause] I think it's probably because the people in control at the top are men, basically, and they don't want to let women in… but I also think it's that there aren't enough women who are going for those higher posts* (Fiona).

Kate admitted that although she had not experienced problems, it was something she thought about, but it did not constrain her in a personal sense: *"when I'm actually sitting in there [in a meeting], I don't find I'm thinking 'oh gosh it's all men in here and I'm the only woman'"*.

Other women, drawing on personal experience and observations, also questioned issues related to gender. Juliet observed that women who were successful researchers had mastered the art of being single-minded: *"I have looked at them… I don't feel I've got what they've got… I think that they've just <u>found</u> the trick of compartmentalising a lot better than I've ever found it"*. Fiona reflected that it took many years before her unplanned career

shifted from one centred around interesting experiences to one where she strategically focussed on progression. She wondered whether there was a generational difference because her younger colleagues appeared more career-focussed: *"certainly in [School] now there's a breed of women, or of people, irrespective of women or men, that are <u>more</u> ambitious and strategic about what they're doing"*.

Some perceived the institution to be highly gendered. For Juliet, like others, the divide was along the lines of teaching and research as she noticed that it was always women at teaching and learning events, unless it was related to technology. She stated both in her map and her interview that *"women teach, men research"*. Isabel believed there were gendered attitudes and behaviours in the institution which would not be acceptable in other professional contexts outside of HE, and which were a shock to her when she began working in HE, some of which *"made my heckles go up"* and which she believed were embedded:

> it doesn't really matter how good the head of department, head of School, no matter how fair or how transparent anyone is, there is an <u>inherent</u> gender bias in academia (Isabel).

She was also not convinced by the institutional rhetoric about a commitment to gender equality: *"I think the university thinks it's doing well, and I actually think it's not"*.

Like Isabel, Alison also perceived gender bias to be systemic within the institution:

> *"I think, [this] university is really bad at putting its money where its mouth is when it comes to women's careers, and it, it's <u>so</u> embedded that they can't see it themselves"*.

Alison provided some examples from her own and colleagues' experience of being patronised, bullied and of witnessing unfair allocation of prestigious roles, but one example she provided shows how gender bias can be more subtle. She described the institution's press team coverage of an award recently won by a female and her male colleagues. The female academic was referred to by her name only, whilst her male colleagues were referred to as professors and experts several times in the piece:

"and it said that she'd worked on something, it was, the whole project was her idea, and yet they [the men] were the experts and she'd worked on it and you know, that's what makes me cross" (Alison).

Donna felt anger about inequality she had experienced, including patronising behaviour, and expressed frustration that no one called it out: *"at no point does someone go 'that doesn't look right', yeah they're always willing to kind of take the piss and take advantage"*. Nicole asked where the evidence was that the institution was committed to gender equality *"when you say do they [the institution] value women, I am not sure […] how do we celebrate the fact that we have more women here?"*. As a research-intensive institution, she believed we should be leading the field in gender equality and advising local government and industry, rather than being led by them, *"because the evidence comes from research"*.

Two women referred to the way in which male colleagues supported each other, referred to in the literature as an "academic boys' club" (see literature review). Isabel believed there were different factors creating such favouritism, including: *"a higher chance of men working full time, I think [this] feeds into them being more likely to get the jobs",* which she believed then created *"a higher chance of men supporting men"*. This set in motion a cycle of advantage for men:

> *I have seen a number of examples of a man taking someone [men] under their wing along to things like meetings and being involved in projects which get things on their CVs which make them then more likely to get roles of significance, when there were probably more qualified women who they should have been taking along* (Isabel).

Penny noted that many of the men were freer than their female colleagues to have a drink together on a Friday evening:

> *I think it makes a difference because if you're sort of, I don't know, to some extent if you're not going out and having a drink with the boys on a Friday afternoon, um, because you know you've got to go back cos you've got children* (Penny).

She stressed that she was always invited by her colleagues, but her family commitments meant it was not possible to join them, which then *"does have an impact because you don't get to know people in the same way"*. Consequently, she noted, her male colleagues were more likely to collaborate with each other on research projects. In the interview she said it was not so much of a problem, but her career map in Figure 5.8 below was more revealing about the impact where she described herself as "isolated", the implication being that she therefore had to try harder to access the prestige economy than her male colleagues:

> **Research: Isolated as only one other woman in my research group.**
>
> **Has impact on applying for research funding.**

Figure 5.8 Career map extract for Penny capturing isolation from research groups

5.2.5 Professional development programmes for women

Six of the fifteen women provided interesting insights into their perceptions of and experiences of university and sector initiatives to support women in their career progression including take up of leadership roles. Three women had completed the Advance HE's Aurora leadership development initiative for women and three had completed the Springboard work and personal development programme for women. Their experiences are important to note because institutions invest in these programmes as part of a wider drive to address the gender gap in HE and to feed the pipeline.

Those taking part in Aurora expressed initial discomfort about taking part in female only initiatives. They had mixed feelings and a *"slight <u>unease</u> about doing anything that was labelled for women"* (Barbara). They wondered about the ethics of excluding male colleagues who would also benefit from such support, and regretted that women-only programmes such as Aurora and StellarHE were *"basically the only games in town"* (Barbara). They also hoped the programme would avoid a *"we're all out there fighting the*

men" narrative (Heather), preferring a focus on learning about leadership, rather than about all being women.

What was most striking was that, despite their reservations at the time, the learning gained from Aurora had positively impacted their career development in tangible ways for all three women. All three found the sessions on leadership helpful; the quality of the talks and the use of learning sets were also highlighted. When preparing for an interview for a new role, Barbara realised that her thinking was: *"really, really informed by those Aurora days… and so at that point I thought… You know what? this has stuck, it, it made sense after all".* She reflected, *"it did turn out to be a bigger deal than I thought it would be".* Samantha said of Aurora: *"in hindsight, a few years on, having now done some tricky things in terms of team management and adaptive leadership and that kind of thing, then I will refer back to it again".* A session within Aurora on imposter syndrome and gendered approaches to job applications, whereby men are often more confident in their assessment of their abilities, struck a powerful chord with her, and prompted her to apply for a new position. She applied, and was successful, and said *"I actually think that as a direct result of going to Aurora I got this job […] because of <u>one</u> session in the five days".* Heather said, looking back, *"I did find it really, really helpful"*, and demonstrates how such programmes can benefit the institution too, when she explained what she gained from the experience:

> *I suppose using Aurora to give yourself that space to, to try and think about what do I do and am I doing it in the best way and I suppose really trying to think about what value do I bring to the university? and am I making the best use of the skills and knowledge that I've got?* (Heather).

The three who completed the Springboard programme were positive about the opportunity that Springboard provided to network with other women from across the university but were slightly less clear about the tangible impact long term. Fiona provided some insights into why it was helpful to connect with women in key roles across the university, saying that it was *"<u>really </u>interesting [to look at] what was happening in other departments and sharing ideas and seeing some of the same patterns of things".* The relationships she established on

the programme continued beyond it, with lunch meetings which enabled helpful work-related discussions.

For Louise the networking also had an impact. She said, *"Springboard is about [...] making connections and using connections [...] and certainly it gave me access to people across campus much more".* One of the colleagues she was buddied with during the programme went on to become an important mentor figure, inviting her to collaborate on prestigious research projects which resulted in publications. She said, *"in terms of career profile I think that has been a big game changer, getting involved".*

Echoing some of the women' comments about Aurora, Alison gained much from the Springboard content, finding some of the talks inspirational and finding that they helped her to reflect on her career development:

> *it crystalized the way that I was thinking about my career and also, what I found really helpful were the talks from other women in the university and there were some really, really good ones, and they were very personal* (Alison).

For Louise and Fiona, the programme helped in addressing some of their issues relating to confidence. For Louise it was helpful in raising awareness about imposter syndrome and understanding it a little better. Fiona, when asked what she had hoped to gain from the programme, replied: *"a bit more confidence in what I was doing, and I was looking slightly towards, having a stronger sense of my own professional identity".*

5.2.6 Research-teaching tension and the prestige economy

Underpinning the prestige economy in HE is a culture in which research is perceived to have a higher value than teaching and an inevitable tension between the two exists, particularly for those in teaching intensive and teaching support roles. Twelve of the fifteen women shared their views on this theme, which for some was experienced as a gendered issue.

Section 5.2.3 highlighted the impact of research activity being more highly valued than teaching by promotion panels, but interviews revealed that this disparity can cut throughout one's career, it was not only experienced during the promotions process. For example,

Nicole noted that workload models in her School were more favourable for research staff over teaching intensive staff. The resulting two-tier system could also lead to condescension shown towards teaching staff; for example, Juliet had a colleague who, without any irony, used phrases such as *"only teaching"* and being a *"real academic"*. Nicole recalled a colleague's response to her promotion: "*this female colleague said to me, 'well when I got promoted I had oh, fifty publications to my name, how many have you got?' And that was really common*". Although Alison believed teaching was gaining more value, she said:

> *it's still seen at the coal face as being the second class job… you know I've been in meetings in [department] where people were joking about, you know, 'oh you better get that published or – horror, horror – you'll be put on a TI contract!' […] In front of several people on TI contracts* (Alison).

Emma articulated the realisation that you had to play the system in a prestige economy to build your profile in ways that were recognised and rewarded. She knew that success in teaching and excellent student feedback *"doesn't win you the points in academia"* unless you also published a paper about it, *"you could be the absolute best teacher but if you haven't <u>written</u> about it somewhere they don't care"*. She compared inspiring three hundred students in a lecture to speaking at a conference *"where I had the graveyard shift at four thirty to five pm with about ten people in the room"*. She needed the resulting academic kudos for her promotion case, but saw the irony in the situation which also felt like game playing:

> *so I get the cachet for having presented it at national conference […] I'm doing it because it looks good on paper… but in reality what has more impact? […] and so I, I feel like you know, last year I played the game… But I don't like that, it feels fake (Emma).*

Tessa acknowledged the importance of research but said if there was not also good teaching, *"then – it's not a university"*. She saw the marketing banners across the campus which celebrated the work of ground-breaking researchers and wondered where the equivalent banners were about the amazing teachers:

I mean they should be all over the university in the same way that we've got these flags saying you know, so and so's doing this research and it's changing lives, and [...] we should have, um, [colleague]'s using flipped learning and [colleague]'s doing amazing things with EBL [laughs] (Tessa)*.*

Meanwhile, some of the women believed that their male colleagues were more strategic in the way they engaged with HEA Fellowships, only doing the minimum required by the institution and regarding anything additional as time wasted. As Charlotte said: *"men scorn it and say, 'oh I'm not doing that I'm being judged on my research'"*. Donna's colleagues took a similar view about HEA Senior Fellowship being unnecessary because in promotion terms it offered no advantage over HEA Fellowship: *"you know the department was very much 'don't do this, you need to focus on research'... you know what I mean?"*.

A further frustration expressed was that, compared to tangible research outputs, the time-consuming labour of teaching and supporting students was often invisible to others: *"does anyone know I'm doing lots of this stuff? Is this being noticed in any way?"* (Louise). Heather said the same about the invisibility of much teaching and learning leadership work: *"a lot of what you do can feel quite intangible you know particularly lots of strategy work"*. Although the revised criteria and processes for promotion introduced by the institution were designed to more clearly signal teaching quality and narrow the research-teaching divide, evidencing teaching excellence and teaching and learning leadership work in terms of outcomes could still be difficult. This tension between research and teaching is closely linked to the prestige economy and an important element in this research study. As will be seen in Chapter 6, when we return to this theme, the women's views about prestige and status attached to senior categories of teaching fellowships were shaped in relation to their experiences of this tension, and of research activity being traditionally held in higher esteem than teaching.

5.2.7 Confidence issues

Issues relating to confidence are also referenced elsewhere in this chapter, but as a theme it warrants specific attention because it was reflected upon by many of the women and, as with other themes, is gender related. It is relevant for institutions seeking to encourage

women's career progression because a lack of confidence can be constraining as well as impacting on wellbeing. As Charlotte said,

> *I don't know if you're anything like me, like, you could have a hundred <u>really</u> positive interactions and you have one terrible interaction […] and you obsess about that one bad one […] it is a form of torture* (Charlotte).

It is too simplistic to conclude that some of the women I interviewed were extremely confident whilst others were not; in fact, almost all were outwardly confident. The interviews revealed more subtle confidence related issues. For example, many of the women I spoke to were extremely modest in the way they articulated and even downplayed their achievements whilst others felt they suffered from imposter syndrome.

Male assumption

In line with research about men's apparent confidence compared to women (see Section 2.5.7) some of the women commented that men displayed more outward signs of confidence. For example, Heather said about meetings she attended, *"[it] sounds a bit clichéd – but I do see a sort of a male assumption [slight laugh] 'I am talking and you will be listening' type thing".* She wondered what underpinned this:

> *And is there an advantage…? It does seem to me that men do that more than women, why is that?... And is it because they've kind of grown up like that or is there a sort of gravitas that's bestowed on them?* (Heather).

Gendered expressions of confidence may exacerbate the gender gap in terms of men achieving more favourable contract and salary terms. Donna reflected on her experiences of male colleagues being paid more than her for the same role and suggested that it was *"probably because they were better at negotiating 'cos they'd been taught how to do that"*. Louise made a similar point, noting that all the Teaching Fellows in her School were female because if there were men in the role:

they've got the confidence to move on, so they do […] they use it as a stepping stone and they go on, whereas I think the girls, or myself, I can speak for myself, has that fear of moving on or, or are less <u>mobile</u> (Louise).

She was blunter than Donna about male colleagues' negotiating skills: "*I think boys are likely to throw their toys out the pram and kick up a stink and then they create the environment they need to progress*".

Seeking validation

In relation to confidence, the need for validation was referenced by a third of the women. Barbara, like Samantha, learned via Aurora about research showing men were more likely than women to apply for a job even if they did not have all the skills and experience required, and said:

> *Do we as women need to feel that we've got more external validation, er you know are we looking for proof for ourselves to enable us to go for the next thing, in a way that maybe men don't, cos they just for whatever reason inherently believe that they can do all this stuff? (Barbara).*

Barbara related this point to the overall theme of this research, that of women seeking professional recognition and reward for teaching, by suggesting that as a result of their inherent confidence men were less likely to feel the need to seek "*these rewards, these gongs or whatever you want to call them".* Fiona pondered the same issues around validation, but linked it to reflective practice:

> "*I don't think we [women] <u>need</u> more [support] but I think we're more conscious of needing it, um, because we reflect a bit more, again that's a huge generalisation but I think we do [reflect more]… on whether we're doing a good job or not (Fiona).*

Imposter syndrome can fuel a need for validation to provide much needed reassurance. Six of the fifteen women made a reference to suffering from imposter syndrome at some point in their careers. Juliet reflected upon how common imposter syndrome was amongst women, and the assumption by those who suffer from it that they were the only ones:

I went to the imposter syndrome [workshop] and, and it was wall to wall women… so I think it's probably more characteristic of women, regardless of personality… there were some pretty surprising women there as well… who I wouldn't have thought, they had a problem (Juliet)*.*

The institution, and the sector in general, is increasingly employing people in professional services support roles and appointing people to teach without a PhD based on their industry and professional expertise; for some, the need for validation was literally about feeling like an imposter due to not having a traditional academic profile. As Isabel highlighted, this *"need for reassurance […] need for validation [is] because I'm in a non-traditional role"*. Tessa, in a professional services role, admitted that she was seeking evidence that she fitted in. Having achieved a senior category of HEA Fellowship she felt reassured: *"okay, I, I do, I do now belong in this environment, this is, this is some affirmation for me".* Chapter 6 returns to this theme in relation to prestige and the motivations for and impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in HE.

Critical confidence factors

Perhaps not surprisingly, many of the women spoke extremely confidently about their abilities as a teacher. For some, their confidence had developed through teaching itself. Teaching was a role they spoke passionately about and one where they appeared comfortable in themselves, and felt useful, as Tessa described: "*I feel really good when I'm in a classroom you know […] whoever it is, and I feel like the sort of stuff that I [do] really makes a good difference for the university".* Fiona had always been confident in herself as a teacher but struggled with other aspects of her role; she believed confidence lay in having a strong sense of professional identity:

Yeah, cos the confidence still [laughs] is, you know, I get shit scared before presentations, even though I'm trying to talk myself out of it, but, yeah, it is about that […] being recognised and recognising yourself though, as a professional (Fiona).

The professional development programmes referred to in Section 5.2.5 aim to address confidence issues in women, with some success. For example, it spurred Samantha to achieve a promotion and it helped Louise to recognise her imposter syndrome. Barbara

made an interesting comment about an outcome of the Aurora programme regarding confidence; she said that it had helped her to stand tall, to own her space and to *"feel hefty"* in a room full of colleagues.

Kate, who regarded herself as a confident person, provided an interesting insight into how her confidence had developed over time. Several times in her interview she referred to having been managed and mentored early on in her career by people who believed in her and encouraged her, which fuelled her confidence:

> *maybe I probably wasn't <u>that</u> confident before that, but the fact that somebody, I think I said it here [map], the fact that somebody else thought I could do something, gave me huge confidence to do it* (Kate).

She described the belief others had in her as "*very empowering, building up my experience and knowledge […] cos again that fed into the whole confidence thing".* Being given the opportunities to take on challenging roles was also highlighted as an important element in developing confidence. Figure 5.9 below shows an extract from her career journey map where she summarised the critical factors in her career progression; these highlight the importance of opportunity, encouragement, and belief from others, plus the idea that success itself feeds confidence:
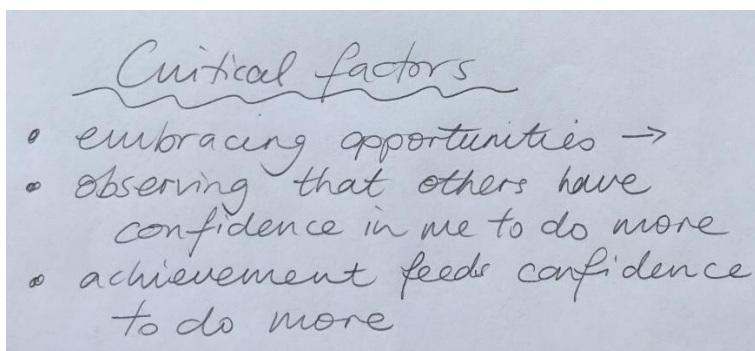
Figure 5.9 Career map extract for Kate listing critical confidence factors

Heather provided an anecdote which shows how sustaining confidence can be during difficult times and links it directly to values. During a period of bullying at a previous institution, Heather's confidence remained due to her strong sense of professional values

and her conviction that the person doing the bullying lacked integrity, as did the senior leadership team who avoided tackling it effectively. Emerging from the situation with a generous pay out and her confidence intact, Heather's leap into the future and strong sense of optimism was vividly captured in the extract from her career map in Figure 5.10 below:

Figure 5.10 Career map extract for Heather capturing sense of confidence and optimism

5.2.8 Importance of mentoring

Thirteen of the fifteen women reflected on the role that mentors had had on their careers along the way, highlighting significant mentor figures in their maps and/or referring to them in interviews, or else reflecting upon a lack of mentors. Consistent with other values articulated throughout these interviews was the desire to also be a good mentor to others in return. As Tessa said, *"and I'd like to be that person as well, I'd like to be able to pass things on"*. Awareness was also shown that the process of supporting others can prove to be a learning experience for oneself.

The instrumental impact of good mentoring

A majority of the women expressed appreciation of influential mentors, both female and male, who had provided encouragement to apply for senior categories of teaching fellowships, helped them draw out their teaching story, given useful feedback, recommended them for new roles or had simply been there to listen.

The powerful and long-lasting effect that positive mentoring early in one's career can have was also acknowledged. For example, Tessa referred to two *"key people"* from early in her career whose influence still resonated, who had had *"quite a profound impact"* on her. Kate said that the self-belief she developed from her first *"fabulous"* line manager and mentor, was *"instrumental"* and had sustained her through challenging periods in her career: *"and I think that that has… very much seen me though, you know, even down to here [indicates more recent, difficult time on the map]"*.

Heather highlighted the positive impact of good mentors more than any of the other women. She referred on her map to "*working with giants"* at the start of her career with people who had since become leaders in their field. Most interestingly, Heather listed the factors which contributed to excellent mentoring and in doing so she provided a checklist of good mentoring which overlapped with the "critical factors" list Kate provided in Figure 5.9. Heather had benefitted from "*lots of good feedback, lots of confidence building, lots of giving you opportunities to go and do things and encouraging you".* She also revealed a further reason why good mentoring was valuable early in one's career; as she explained, her first line manager was an excellent *role model*, who taught her how to aim high as a professional:

> *"it kind of provided a sort of template of this is, this is how to be a good manager […] this is how you behave as a professional, these are the values that are important… she just modelled it on who she was […] that's stuck in my head throughout my career".*

Good mentoring and confidence

Comments in interviews made it clear that good mentor figures can significantly boost individuals' self-confidence, as already evidenced in Figure 5.9 and comments by Heather above. Louise noted that her informal mentor:

> *"has had a <u>huge</u> influence on my… self-worth, my value to the university […] I think that boosted my confidence, it built into my [award] […] she's constantly doing little nudges in a 'have you thought about…? maybe you're going to go onto…?'"* (Louise).

Likewise, Nicole was full of appreciation for the difference her two mentors had made to her career. She said "*I am grateful to them for ever, you know, [… they] took me under their wing and um, believed in me [emotional]".* She explained that they involved her in projects which had impacted her career, but it was their belief in her which still resonated.

5.2.9 Expressions of professional identity

Across the interviews, few women explicitly referred to the term 'professional identity'. Instead they alluded to it via references to self-confidence and validation, feeling a sense of belonging either to the institution or a community of practice, continually developing oneself through CPD, wanting to do meaningful and useful work in academia and gaining recognition for their expertise as teachers alongside other aspects of their role. Some of the women were juggling multiple identities, for example as mothers, partners and professionals with part-time roles outside of the institution. This is captured in Figure 5.11 where Donna depicted her dual professional identities as walking a tightrope between two worlds.
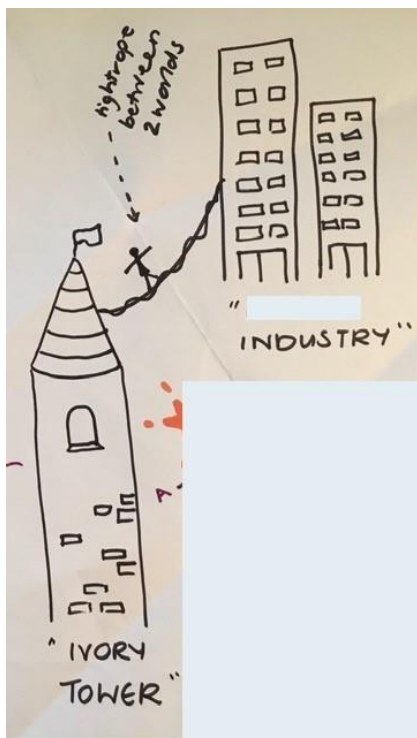
Figure 5.11 Career map extract for Donna illustrating dual identity

Some of the women's references and allusions to identity evidenced that it is complicated. For Donna, moving between different countries, moving between industry and academia and finding that teaching and research were in competition had led her to feel like an outsider and question herself. She had worked hard to move from a position where *"all that stuff becomes a straight jacket"* to finding a balance and being able to say *"I am all these things rather than always being torn"* and realising that *"I can have these multiple identities".* Nicole also came from another country and noted that learning to understand herself and others' perceptions of her was *"a little bit cultural as well".* She had consciously learned to be more adaptable and to feel comfortable.

Some women believed that engaging in professional development activity could strengthen their sense of self. For Louise, attending a leadership programme had been helpful: *"it made me realise I'm a manager not a leader… that my natural place is management not leadership".* Fiona saw a clear link between gaining professional recognition, confidence and professional identity and found taking on personal challenges, such as presenting at conferences, to be helpful:

> *it means that instead of being tied in the day-to-day thing it gets me to stand back and look at the bigger picture […] it's helped my confidence but <u>more</u> than that it's helped me… establish myself, my own recognition of myself as a professional* (Fiona).

Most of the women were proud of their identities as teachers. Those with TI and professional services roles reflected more about their professional identity than those on T&R contracts, particularly in terms of the way the status of research in the institution impacted on them. Kate provided an example of this when she described the caution with which she approached the move from an academic to a professional services contract. She said she *"did spend a few days thinking about that"* and *"there was a sense of loss, but not really being able to identify precisely what I would be losing".* She decided it was partly about *"would I lose some credibility?"* but only because she wanted to achieve certain goals for the university in her new role and hoped she could still garner respect:

that was my question really, because I was quite clear that there was a whole raft of things that we needed to be doing, as a university, er, and it was those things I was really focused on, rather than my career or my identity (Kate).

Juliet also made a clear connection between notions of status and identity when she said that strongly identifying as a teacher in her department meant she did not feel like an academic, *"I'm not rated a real academic by [colleagues]".* The link between professional identity and communities of practice was made clear in what she said next: *"however, I don't think it matters that much to me, because I have found this other, niche, or identity"* by which she meant the community of colleagues across the institution who care about teaching. Tessa also expressed her sense of identity in terms of belonging, of feeling that she had found the right role for her skills which drew on the many strands from her career thus far. She expressed this in her career map as being a 'round peg in a round hole', as shown in Figure 5.12:
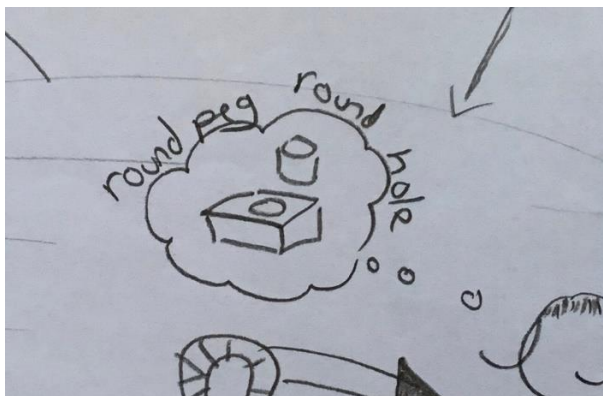
Figure 5.12 Career map extract for Tessa expressing identity as a sense of belonging

During the interview Tessa reinforced her strong sense of place in the institution:

it feels like it's all come together, for me, where I am at the moment which is why I think I did the round peg in the round hole… […] lots of threads have all started to come together […] it just feels like it's, it's the right place for me to be (Tessa).

In general, this study found that achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships could positively impact on one's sense of professional identity. This is explored in greater depth in

Chapter 7, which shows that ideas about professional identity overlap with notions of prestige, confidence, belonging to a community of practice and a sense of being valued by the institution.

5.2.10 Personal and professional values

The women in the study expressed a strong sense of values in terms of what they believed mattered about work and life. As can be seen across the summaries so far, their values reflected a strong sense of caring, of wanting to be authentic, of wanting to act with integrity, to keep growing and to do useful work. Values were often expressed implicitly, for example in this comment:

> the thing that's really important is making sure we have <u>really</u> <u>good</u> quality teaching in [School] <u>and</u> that the students are supported, and those are my sort of two pillars I suppose (Emma).

Awareness was expressed by the women about where their values were at odds with the institution; this was mostly regarding perceptions of inequality and institutional support of a prestige economy where research was rewarded above teaching (see Section 5.2.6).

The women expressed a range of frustrations and disappointments, but they were also highly appreciative about working in the institution. One underlying reason for their positivity was the value they placed on having good colleagues and collegial relationships. Charlotte said: *"I've put a lot of effort into relationships […] because that's what I really value about working here"*. Penny had especially valued good colleagues during difficult times:

> *"I didn't get that promotion but […], you know, your colleagues make a big difference don't they […] not just in my School, there are so many wonderful people right across the university"* (Penny).

As will be seen in Chapter 7, Section 7.2.2, about communities of practice, this appreciation was also about working with people who share the same values as you, particularly the same values about teaching in an environment where teaching sometimes felt under-appreciated.

A strong value which emerged was the belief that supporting and championing teaching was useful and important work for the institution. This was evidenced in many comments across the interviews. For example, Samantha said about her role: *"I think you spend a short amount of time on this earth so you might as well make the most of it and do something useful".* For Donna, it was about adding value, as she wondered: *"can I add more value to higher education by not working in my discipline but working in pedagogy? […] Can I make the student experience more valuable?".* This theme of wanting to do useful work is reflected in Section 6.2 about the women's motivations for seeking senior categories of teaching fellowships, and about doing useful work as an outcome from gaining their new status.

5.3   Conclusion

This chapter, which addressed the first research question, has highlighted some key themes which emerged from hearing about the career journeys of women who champion teaching in a research-intensive higher education institution. Findings indicate that many of the women did indeed feel they had to navigate a prestige economy which was also gendered. Whilst their stories revealed frustration about this, particularly regarding progression and promotion, they also showed evidence of resilience, pragmatism and optimism in their approach to career development. They were also deeply appreciative of opportunities and support available to them to progress in careers they valued and found meaningful. Themes highlighted in this chapter which we will return to in the following two chapters include professional identity, confidence, a sense of belonging and values.

These findings provide important context for Chapter 6 and 7 which re-visit some of the themes highlighted here in relation to the final two research questions. Research Question Two examines notions of prestige for women who champion teaching (Chapter 6), and Research Question Three explores the impact of achieving professional recognition for teaching on their career journeys (Chapter 7).

Chapter 6 About notions of prestige: findings for RQ2

6.1 Introduction to findings about prestige and senior teaching fellowships

Chapter 5 summarised the findings from the interview data and career journey maps in relation to the first research question for this study taking a holistic look at the career experiences of women. Chapter 6 now presents the findings from the interview data analysed in relation to the second research question about prestige associated with senior categories of teaching fellowships.

This question was inspired by the consistently high proportion of women in the institution who achieve senior categories of teaching fellowships, and a corresponding gap in the literature about professional recognition, gender and prestige. In a research-intensive institution where women hold the majority of part-time and teaching intensive roles, this study explores whether, at a time when teaching quality is of increasing strategic and economic importance to HE institutions, women may be leveraging their achievements in teaching to access a prestige economy which, as highlighted in the literature review, evidence shows to be a research and male-privileged domain.

The second research question is as follows:

RQ2:   What prestige, if any, do mid-career women associate with senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

In addressing this second research question, the sub-themes belonging to the following overarching themes were relevant (see Figure 3.6 for a full list of themes and sub-themes):

- Motivations for seeking senior categories of teaching fellowships
- Impact and/or benefits of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships

The interviews reveal a range of motivations for seeking senior teaching fellowships and some women referred either directly or indirectly to prestige factors. What can also be seen is that notions of prestige come in many guises. Section 6.2 summarises these findings.

6.2 Findings

6.2.1 Investment in career progression

To engage in professional development

Regarding motivation, a third of the fifteen women identified the application process as an opportunity to engage in continuing professional development. The approach required for all four applications, SFHEA, PFHEA, UTF and NTF is reflective and evaluative; it therefore makes sense that the women regarded the process as a type of self-reflective exercise, a chance to identify gaps in their practice and help them to plan next steps in their careers. As Samantha said:

> *I wanted to test myself again… you know, and reflect on, had I, had I changed, was I keeping up you know myself… so it was, again, you know, about seeing where I was professionally* (Samantha).

The usefulness of the application process was further expressed by Fiona:

> *I needed a bit of self-reflection and to look at where I was at, and I hadn't done anything <u>internal</u>, it was an <u>internal</u> process for me, I hadn't done anything like that for a while* (Fiona).

For some, the process also provided an opportunity to engage with pedagogic literature, as Donna explained: "*I really enjoyed the pedagogy and so some of it's about empowering yourself by giving yourself something to engage with the scholarship*".

Also related to professional development, the women expressed awareness that the sector-wide recognition of HEA Fellowships and teaching awards made them a worthwhile investment for the future, if they ever wished to move to another institution.

To support an application for promotion

In a prestige economy, promotion is one of the ultimate rewards to be gained, or 'purchased'. Either HEA Fellow, Senior or Principal Fellow status is a formal requirement for promotion to Associate Professorship and Professorship within the institution and so it was anticipated that a motivating factor for some of the women might be to go beyond the

minimum requirement of HEA Fellow status. Eight of the fifteen women said promotion was a motivating factor prior to applying. Charlotte used the opportunity most consciously and strategically: *"I think I did everything at once to try and make the case as watertight as possible"* and later in the interview, admitted she did so on not one but two occasions:

> *I was absolutely reckless with it because… I knew if I got the [award] that would help my case to make a grade 7 and I knew if I got [award] that would definitely help my case to get grade 8 so I kind of played the game* (Charlotte).

Some motivated by promotion took a longer-term view, strategically identifying steps they needed to put in place, for instance: *"because longer term erm I do want to apply for a promotion to professor… and I realised what I was really lacking was anything which had a national influence"* (Barbara) and *"so I did this, I was building my CV, but also I was identifying people who could help me get where I wanted"* (Alison).

A negative spin on prestige and promotion

Whilst findings show that HEA Fellowship was approached as a positive opportunity by the women in this study, Barbara emphasised that the prestige attached to professional recognition in relation to promotion was both a major driver *and* a barrier for some colleagues in the institution:

> *[SFHEA is] a hurdle that's not, not approached joyously for most people I would say… I think it does [carry weight on promotion boards] but I think for many people that's the only reason they do it… it's a means to an end* (Barbara).

Three of the women were motivated to apply for a senior category of teaching fellowship in response to a failed promotion which they were extremely disappointed about. They were motivated to strengthen their next submission but also to address their feelings of dissatisfaction, as articulated by Donna:

> *Yeah I think that I was frustrated… I was just fed up with all of that, so you do, some of this is setting goals for yourself, so maybe it is prestige economy cos you're going well, I need to set my own goals* (Donna).

Isabel, similarly, expressed a mix of motivation and frustration: *"I think that rather fired me up even more, I had a real crisis of, of um, what on earth am I doing working for this organisation?"*.

Two women admitted that prestige factors motivated them but regretted that theirs was a metrics-driven rather than a value-inspired approach. As Isabel said *"I put it on my CV"* but she felt afterwards it was *"a bit of a shame, because actually I feel that [senior categories of fellowship] is something bigger… and I think perhaps the university turned it into a little bit of a negative spin"*. Similarly, Charlotte said:

> *I don't want to do myself out of something here [slight laugh] but it almost undermines the gravitas I guess… I freely admitted to them [colleagues] that I just applied to it just to try and get the pieces of paper for the promotion… maybe that's not in the spirit of it, <u>but</u>, I couldn't help feeling that if I got those pieces of paper it would help my case* (Charlotte).

6.2.2 Building on teaching achievements

To capture and articulate achievements in teaching

As might be expected, eleven of the fifteen women were motivated to make an application for a senior category of teaching fellowship to capture and evidence their achievements in teaching. Section 5.2.6 highlighted ways in which some of the women struggled in an environment in which research activity was seen to be more highly valued and easily rewarded than teaching. The women's comments revealed that the opportunity to have their teaching recognised as a prestigious activity was highly valued. For example, the realisation that the day-to-day labour of teaching, which often remains invisible to others, could in fact amount to a meaningful account of teaching excellence to share with others, was neatly expressed in this remark:

> *and I suddenly realised I do have a story to tell here about things that I've learned [about teaching] and you know, all of a sudden there I was with a story of why I was wonderful* (Barbara).

Frustration about the lower status awarded to teaching, and the need to articulate one's achievements as a teacher, was expressed by Emma about her motivation for making an application:

> *And when you've got this tension between teaching and research where there is an element of research being sort of the gods and golden tickets in teaching when you're just a body, you know, mopping up what they don't want to teach, I guess part of me wanted to say 'well, hold on a second'… you know, I'm not just a, a person who's covering those classes, I'm actually, I'm doing it because I'm good at it* (Emma).

Encouragement by others

Section 5.2.8 highlighted the importance of encouragement from mentor figures in general; a third of the fifteen women made explicit reference to being encouraged to make an application for a senior category of teaching fellowship by others such as a mentor, line manager or by peers.

Section 5.2.7 revealed issues around confidence for some of the women, for example resulting in modesty about achievements. Some of the comments revealed how important it therefore was that individuals who assumed their achievements were modest received encouragement to apply for awards that they otherwise may not have had the confidence to consider, as illustrated here:

> *I was really lucky I have really good colleagues… who kind of grabbed me and said 'right do this, do this, do this'… I probably wouldn't have done it that year if I hadn't been pushed […] if I hadn't had [colleague] saying 'oh for goodness sake go for it'* (Emma).

In some cases, encouragement came from the institution identifying a strategic benefit to having staff with senior teaching fellowships, particularly HEA Principal Fellowship or a National Teaching Fellowship award. The small number of Principal Fellows and National Teaching Fellows across the sector lends their status some exclusivity which is prestigious in itself, and this kudos can be strategically harnessed, for example in an institutional TEF

submission, to evidence teaching excellence. The following anecdote evidenced encouragement at an institutional level:

> *so somebody approached me, um, and said 'you know, you should go for this and I said no, I'm not ready'… and they said 'no no no we think, we think you should do it now'… they said 'we need you', and I said 'ohhh [sighs] alright then, okay, I'll do it, I'll do it' [laughing]* (Kate).

6.2.3 As a starting point and enabler

To do useful work

Section 5.2.10 highlighted the way in which the beliefs and actions of the women I interviewed were strongly driven by values, in particular the desire to do work that was worthwhile. A third of the women expressed an interest in applying for senior categories of teaching fellowships as something which would enable them to do meaningful and useful work for the institution or sector, rather than as an end point. Several women emphasised this point, for example:

> *I could then use it as a platform to try and do something <u>more</u>, you know […] even just within the institution, will my voice be heard a bit more if I've got this? […] I don't just want to have it and 'look at me, I've got it', it's got to then be a starting point […] that's the real value I think* (Heather).

Although there was a clear commitment to being of use to the institution, not everyone was clear what this meant in practice:

> *I was thinking… we get this award, so what?.… how does the university use us? What do we want to do? I don't like accountability, but we must be held responsible for something* (Nicole).

Belonging to a community of practice

A sense of belonging to a community of like-minded colleagues was mostly identified as a benefit *after* applying for senior categories of teaching fellowship, but it was also identified

by three of the women as a motivating factor beforehand. For Tessa it was about finding colleagues she admired and could identify with:

> *I've been along to the briefings and I've seen who some of the other [award holders] are and, they're all people that I like [both laugh]… And I feel like it's sort of a… it's a club I'd like to belong to… it's like a community of practice for the really fab teachers* (Tessa).

Section 5.2.9 highlighted how expressions of identity were expressed in various ways, including pride in being a teacher, feeling valued by the institution and feeling a sense of belonging. Findings reveal that communities of practice for those who shared similar values about teaching provided a vital space for expressions of identity to be realised. For example, it enabled some women to access a sense of belonging, especially if their own School offered few opportunities to discuss and celebrate teaching:

> *I think that's partly why I wanted to do the [award] thing, was this opportunity to be a part of the community of practice and share… [award] to me wasn't about the recognition it was the, the training opportunity to be involved in discussions about strategy and policy* (Donna).

To support others

Section 5.2.8 referenced a desire amongst the women to 'pass it on' by being a good mentor to others. Four of the women stated that setting an example to colleagues and/or being able to support others through the process was a motivating factor in deciding to apply for senior categories of teaching fellowship. This included demonstrating to colleagues that senior teaching fellowships and awards are achievable, and leading by example:

> *I was leading quite a number of people, and one of my big things at this point was bringing colleagues on, younger people, newer people, into the field… um, and I thought well I can't be supporting them if I hadn't done it myself, so that was one of the key factors* (Fiona).

Kate revealed that her initial lack of personal enthusiasm was overridden by her strong sense of institutional responsibility to support others:

> *and I decided that as I think we were [in senior T&L leadership roles] at that point, we should lead by example… I remember thinking […] oh god, we really should do that, shouldn't we?... Yeah, it was institutional* (Kate).

6.2.4 From the outside

Non-academics can go down this route too

Achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships felt especially important for those in teaching-related professional service roles. As Samantha highlighted, certain prestige factors did not benefit those in non-academic roles, in which case highlighting the achievability of gaining professional recognition to her colleagues was a key motivation for her:

> *well, there is no reason for me to do this, it's not going to give me a pay rise, it's not going to give me a professorship […]* <u>but</u> *it does mean that I could again demonstrate to colleagues that, you know, seriously, we can go down this route* (Samantha).

These women felt it was important to show they shared common ground and spoke the same language as their academic colleagues, to evidence that *"actually I do understand the teaching and learning side of things as well"* (Kate). Where HEA Fellowships were concerned, it was also about being able to engage with the UKPSF:

> *"because… that's [the UKPSF] what the sector has collectively decided is, this is how we articulate what we are and what we do, and, and I need, I needed to have that language"* (Tessa).

For Samantha, this was where academic and non-academic roles intersected:

> *I teach students and I teach staff and I have to remain in good standing, and I have to have an understanding of pedagogy, I can't prove that to you unless I do something that you're doing as well… it's like okay, you need to speak the same language as me, and vice versa* (Samantha).

Outsiders becoming insiders

Also relating to professional identity, a third of the fifteen women saw themselves as 'outsiders' in some way, such as holding a non-academic role, or not having a doctorate. They viewed achieving a senior category of teaching fellowship as a way to compensate for their outsider status. Rather than explicitly referring to prestige, they used other terms such as 'validation', but they were nonetheless referring to a type of prestige they wished to gain, to feel less on the outside:

> *I don't know… I think the badging is nice um and I put it on my email signature… but part of me I guess is doing that because I don't have a doctorate… you know I'm not an internationally recognised academic… so I guess I am looking for sort of, validation [laughs]* (Emma).

Heather believed the sector-wide understanding about HEA Fellowships provided a useful reference point which helped others understand her support-related role:

> *people when they see your job title they don't quite know where you fit in the institution whereas Fellowship, Senior and Principal, is a benchmark in a way that everybody understands* (Heather).

Kate used the term 'credibility' to signify the prestige attached to the status she gained from a teaching award "*because I thought… it would help in terms of building up my credibility, that's what it was about*". She provided an insight into how fortifying credibility could be when it helped her to hold her own amongst senior academics following a challenging career move, "*because, you know it was tough coming from [previous place] to [new role]… for me to feel that I had that credibility… you know cos you had some fairly tough people*".

6.2.5 Notions of prestige after applying

Some of the impact and benefits identified by the women *after* applying clearly indicated an awareness about prestige associated with their new status. The notion of 'prestige' was viewed in positive terms by some, whilst others acknowledged that prestige was indeed a factor but viewed it through a rather weary and sceptical lens.

It does carry prestige

Two thirds of the women referred to senior categories of teaching awards as a type of prestige, of credibility and/or authority. Alison referred very directly to the sense that she was accruing prestige: *"it felt like, I was being recognised for the teaching and learning that I was doing and you know, maybe building up that, that value, that prestige a little bit"*. For Tessa there was simply an enormous sense of achievement: *"so… that was sort of a badge of honour for me actually, I was really, <u>ridiculously</u> proud"*. Later, Tessa reflected on its exclusivity, which she believed carried prestige: *"I mean it does have prestige because it's… there's not that many of us, it's one of the few things you can do that is really related to teaching and learning"*. For Kate, the ensuing institutional recognition all signified status, with photographs taken, a piece on the staff website, and messages of congratulations: *"I think that was… really important actually, that really reinforced that actually this is an important thing"*. Penny believed Senior and Principal Fellowships had a prestige in her School and beyond and she highlighted her new status in grant applications:

> *Definitely in the School I mean um, they're constantly telling other people to do it and it does have a big currency, yes… even if you're applying for funding, it's a, a good thing to have on there* (Penny).

Two of the women shared anecdotes which led them to believe there was sector-level prestige attached to a senior category of teaching award. Barbara, having added her new status to her email signature, was contacted by a PhD student *"and said you know 'I saw that you are a [award] that's, that's really prestigious, I'd really love it if you would be my supervisor'"*. Similarly, Nicole said:

> *today I got an email from someone from [another university] asking me to be the keynote in a conference and they said 'oh, we saw your profile, we think you're wonderful' and it must be via the [award]* (Nicole).

Both these anecdotes point to exactly the type of academic activity – doctoral supervision and keynotes – which accrue points in the prestige economy.

The women acknowledged that senior categories of teaching fellowships provided a value to the institution which might translate into a type of prestige, for example it could improve institutional data on recognised teaching qualifications. Meanwhile, prestigious categories of HEA Fellowship and teaching awards could be highlighted in TEF submissions. Three women nevertheless questioned the extent to which *they* were valued for their achievements in teaching: *"our value to TEF will be recognised, but that doesn't mean to say that our value will be recognised"* (Juliet). Juliet believed achieving senior teaching fellowships in a research-intensive institution could even work against you: *"it's almost a debit point… kind of like you care about something real scholars don't care about"*. Donna expressed a similar sentiment:

> I don't think it was necessarily valued other than the... oh well this is good for the School to say now we've got X number or now we've got another Senior Fellow in the School… um, it was valued from the… stats on paper… but not in terms of you individually (Donna).

Isabel was sceptical about the individual prestige attached to Senior Fellowship *"in an environment which can really de-value teaching"* but believed there was an exclusivity attached to the other awards which made them useful to the institution: *"being able to say you have a UTF or an NTF or a Principal Fellow… that's a currency in the university"*.

For those in non-academic roles, whose routes to promotion work differently, the prestige factor was not surprisingly viewed differently. Samantha was dubious about the benefits of gaining prestige via a senior category of HEA Fellowship: *"I got lots of nice emails from people I knew, um, but in terms of recognition, no, not really… I get to write everyone else's references [laughs], that's all that happens now"*. Kate, also in a non-academic role, believed the institution valued it, as she did, but wondered how many colleagues were aware of her status: *"it's on the bottom of my email but you know apart from that? I wear my badge, but you know, nobody knows what that means unless you're in the inner groups [laughs]"*.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised findings in relation to the second research question about academic prestige associated with senior categories of teaching fellowships: HEA Senior and Principal Fellowship, University Teaching Fellowship and National Teaching Fellowship. Findings reveal that the women were motivated to apply for these awards by a range of different factors which both directly and indirectly relate to prestige. After successfully applying, there was a clear sense of prestige associated with the awards, including a personal pride and a sense of increased credibility. These findings are closely related to the perceived status of teaching within the institution compared to research, and to professional identity, values and a sense of belonging. These themes are further explored in Chapter 7 which explores the impact of achieving senior teaching fellowships in connection with Research Question Three.

Chapter 7 About impact: findings for RQ3

7.1 Introduction to findings about the impact of senior teaching awards

Chapter 5 summarised the findings in relation to the first research question about women's broader career journeys. Chapter 6 then presented the findings in relation to the second research question about the women's perceptions of prestige associated with senior categories of teaching fellowships. Chapter 7 continues to explore notions of prestige but in relation to the longer-term impact for the women of achieving their new status. Although there is a small but growing body of literature on the impact of HEA Fellowships and teaching awards there has been none which considers impact in relation to gender and/or prestige.

Chapter 7 thus presents a summary of findings for the third and final research question:

RQ3:   How do mid-career women articulate the impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

In addressing this third and final research question, the sub-themes belonging to the following overarching theme were relevant (see Figure 3.6 for a full list of themes and sub-themes):

- Impact and/or benefits of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships

A majority of women provided emphatically positive comments about impact and were able to provide specific examples of ways in which their new status had benefitted them and, in places, how it had impacted the institution. The following sections summarise these findings.

7.2 Findings

7.2.1 Internal prestige, confidence and validation

Finding a voice to articulate achievements in teaching

Section 6.2.2 highlighted that wanting to articulate often invisible achievements in teaching

was a motivating factor for some of the women when applying for their new status. Four of the fifteen women referenced that the application process helped them to find a way to do so. As Tessa put it, the UKPSF was how teachers in HE explained *"what we are and what we do"* and engaging with the UKPSF *"gave me the language to be able to do that"*. The application process for HEA Fellowship and teaching awards requires applicants to provide a narrative which is personal and reflective rather than a bulleted list of achievements. The women found it empowering to capture their teaching story, often for the first time, as they realised that it amounted to something. As Barbara explained, *"and I suddenly realised I do have a story to tell here"* (see Section 6.2.2).

The challenge of evidencing teaching impact, which can be less concrete than research outputs, was highlighted in Sections 5.2.6 and 6.2.2, and is part of the reason why it can be difficult to quantify achievements in teaching. Fiona said writing her application took a long time because of the difficulty in evidencing impact. She explained: *"you know that something is successful because you can see that it's working, but you don't collect evidence… it's not always tangible"*. About supporting students, Fiona said, *"it's not like they can tick a sheet… to say… yes I am more autonomous now"*, and, she said, the same can apply when supporting colleagues with their teaching. But it was also why it felt special for some of the women to find a way to capture their achievements in a successful application.

For Barbara, finding her teaching voice was one of the most powerful outcomes of achieving her senior category of HEA Fellowship, and something that she had previously struggled with: *"although whenever you go for a promotion you've got to show how good you are, it was Fellowship which taught me how to do that"*. In part, it was also about *"getting me to overcome my reticence in explaining what I'd done"*. The issue of confidence and modesty is highlighted in Section 5.2.7; however, the point here was also about discovering there was a teaching story to tell, and claiming it, as Barbara explained: *"So, I think just having to create a story around it had a big impact on me"*. It was also the first time that some women had claimed *individual* credit for successful teaching projects:

> *all of those sessions with [CPD Scheme lead] made me look back and say 'yes it was my idea to do that and without me it wouldn't of happened'… and it was being able to*

claim the 'I' rather than just seeing myself as part of a team [...] or anything else... And so that, that was really valuable to me (Barbara).

Kate highlighted how rare the opportunity was to take time out and reflect on teaching achievements: *"it was good cos when I sat down and thought about it actually I began to put the thread together which I'd never really put together until that point"*. For her too, the benefit was impactful:

the value for me of doing the [award] was the process of doing it made me see where I'd come from, and possibly a bit about where I was going [laughs] maybe... it led to me understanding myself a little bit better, I think (Kate).

Internal prestige, increased confidence and a sense of validation

Confidence was explored in Section 5.2.7 and also overlaps with many of the findings presented in Chapter 6 and this chapter. Two thirds of the women discussed ways in which their new status had given them a strong sense of pride, and/or had in some way felt like a validation and/or had increased their confidence. There are also parallels here with notions of academic prestige, but rather than an externally recognised concept of prestige, it was impactful on a personal level. The pride they felt was internal, resulting in what Tessa referred to as *"kind of like a quiet pride I think"*. Juliet explained that her HEA Fellowship status *"means a lot for self-esteem... it's professional self-esteem"*, whilst a direct comparison to the prestige economy was made by Isabel: "*I think it's a much more inward facing prestige"*. The sense of this new status acting as an internal force was also captured by Kate: "*you know it's part of my armour... even if it doesn't say anything to anybody else, it helps me"* (Kate).

Section 5.2.3 summarised the women's experiences of progression and promotion including failed cases and disappointment in the promotion process. Five women referred to a sense of validation in achieving their new teaching status whereby it not only gave them a sense of pride but helped to heal wounds and restore faith in the institution. This sense of validation is conveyed in the following quotation:

I got it and I was sooo, again, <u>pleased</u>, because it… it showed something… to the people who didn't think I was good enough for promotion, that the wider university may have a different perception about who I am… So yeah… that was very, very helpful (Nicole).

The point Nicole makes here links to the theme of faith in the institution being restored, which will be explored in Section 7.2.4. The belief that gaining a new teaching status launched a new, more positive period in their careers will be explored in Section 7.2.3, but this idea, alongside the positive impact on self-esteem, is captured in the following words:

so I look at the period before [new teaching status] as me learning how to be inferior and accepting it, and the period <u>after</u> is thinking, you can unlearn… so it <u>really</u> was the turning point, a huge one (Juliet).

Negative experiences about progression and promotion were referenced in Section 5.2.3. The extent to which their new status helped to "pick them up" from career "lows" was highlighted by several women, for example:

it was a really, hugely uplifting thing, and I felt, you know, so good about it, I didn't really um, er… yeah, I didn't really think that it would be so wonderful… I think it's very much had a positive impact (Penny).

Even for women who did not at all describe themselves as lacking in confidence, their new status strengthened their confidence even further:

I do think in the last year actually I've probably become <u>more</u> outspoken… I've got lots of experience, I've got lots of views, actually, I will speak out… I'm going to question stuff… Yeah and I feel I have the right to do that in a way I suppose (Heather).

For others, the increased confidence resulting from their new status was linked to their sense of professional identity:

I think it did [help confidence levels], because it made me realise how much I'd done, and it also made me realise how much people appreciated the support I'd given them…

and it was a, a reinforcement and a recognition of my own professional identity
(Fiona).

Not everyone was positive about the impact of achieving their new status in relation to career progression. For example, Charlotte was left feeling guilty that her approach to applications for both types of senior teaching fellowship had been so instrumental, on two occasions using applications for senior categories of fellowship to help secure promotions. When asked if she felt a sense of pride she answered *"no"*, in contrast to the other women. Louise felt cynical about her senior teaching fellowship because it had not helped her progress her career at all (whilst Springboard had helped her), saying *"I think it's utter – beep"*.

7.2.2 Belonging to a community of practice

A sense of belonging

Eight of the fifteen women referred to belonging to a community of practice as one of the main benefits of gaining their status. The appreciation of collegiality and friendship expressed in these quotations relate to the idea of belonging and identity. In addition, it relates to the concept of values which were explored in Section 5.2.10, showing that forging positive and meaningful relationships was a high priority for many of the women I interviewed and key to ensuring they were fulfilled in their work. This emerged as a key finding from the research.

The benefit of belonging to a community of practice for senior categories of HEA Fellowships and/or teaching awards was described by Emma as follows: *"basically it's a community of like-minded people who actually care about teaching"*. The description by Emma, and expressed by others, is about values and identity; for example, Juliet said: *"I think it puts you into a community of people who care about the same things that you care about, I think that's the important thing about it"*. Louise highlighted the sense that these were good colleagues, and it was a place to feel safe:

the first [award] meeting I went to, nervous, as always, and then you walk in and you realise it's the same faces… they're nice faces… that attend most seminars and workshops for teaching (Louise).

The opportunity to network across the institution was highlighted by several women as a key benefit where they had not always felt at home in their own School, because, as Nicole said, *"it can be lonely here"*, whilst Juliet said that the members of this community were *"all the people who I regard as very close friends within the university"*. The link to identity was further clarified here by Donna: *"I have a sense of community across the university which in some sense is stronger than my sense of community within the department"*.

The institution became a bigger place

Further benefits of belonging to a community of practice through gaining a senior category of teaching fellowship were highlighted. For example, the process of meeting new people beyond one's School sphere was described as *"empowering"* (Barbara) and *"enriching"* (Penny). The reason why it was empowering, and the impact on one's sense of place in the institution is articulated here:

"cos I think it was introducing me to a different set of people outside of the bubble here […] I like to get out and meet other people and feel I'm part of something that's bigger than this building and that was a good way of doing that" (Barbara).

The way in which a teaching community of practice can also provide an important space for professional development was highlighted by Donna, who came from a small department where research took centre stage: *"I don't feel the department offers me much opportunity for growth, so doing [award] enables me to… have space to grow"*. She provided an example of this benefit, which was being able to benchmark and appraise your work as a teacher:

part of the value of the communities of practice is being able to contextualise what you're doing and what you're experimenting and learning with, with what other people are doing… and being in a small department it becomes too self-referential to… to be able to evaluate your stuff (Donna).

Samantha, reflecting on the value of professional service groups more generally, highlighted a similar benefit: *"if you only look internally, for solutions, then you'll never get there because you, you don't know what else you could do, so, so I have found those [networks] hugely valuable"*.

A further gain identified from belonging to a community of practice for both individuals *and* the institution was where networking had led to fruitful research collaborations which would not have happened otherwise. Nicole described the way in which her award *"opened up an opportunity to talk to colleagues around the university"* resulting in "*some really strong partnerships"*. She referred to the way one such partnership led to a large-scale research alliance which had positively impacted her career development:

> *I am grateful to them for ever, you know, it's… amazing how [colleagues] - took me under their wing and um, believed in me [emotional] […] and making a difference at that scale* (Nicole).

7.2.3 Doors being opened

Recognition as a type of prestige, of credibility and authority
Notions of prestige were explored in Section 6.2 in response to Research Question Two, including the ways in which the women associated prestige with their new teaching status. Findings show that for most of the women, some type of association with prestige provided the motivation to apply, such as a link to promotion, and/or an opportunity to continue to develop as teachers, and/or to do useful work and/or to claim an authority about teaching by telling their story. What is clear is that many of the women felt they gained credibility – a type of prestige - through achieving their new status. Seven of the fifteen women reported that this then generated further opportunities such as invitations to take on teaching related projects or apply for new roles.

It became an enabler
As was highlighted in Section 6.2, a majority of the women viewed their new status as more than simply a new title or end point; they hoped it might help to develop themselves and/or their work in useful ways. Section 7.2 has so far explored the impact and benefits in two

respects: gaining a sense of prestige and belonging to a community of practice, both of which more directly benefitted the individuals themselves. This section now summarises ways in which seven of the fifteen women found their new status opened doors to new opportunities, providing tangible benefits to the institution as well as themselves.

Barbara explained that gaining a senior category of fellowship had enabled her to become a peer assessor for Advance HE as a reviewer of NTF applications. Reading people's applications had led her to think: *"maybe there's not such a huge disconnect between me and somebody who's getting these kinds of titles"*. These insights gave her the confidence to apply for an additional senior teaching fellowship and to aim for further awards in the future. Donna described using the bursary she received for her teaching award to pay for conferences about teaching, as she said, *"the university is now supporting my pedagogic development… and the School is not going to support that… so it's more about an enabling activity"*.

Some of the women reported that their new status had led to invitations to join working groups, committees and communities of practice as a voice of authority about teaching and learning, including as chair. These roles enabled them to develop professionally but also to contribute to university teaching policy and practice in areas such as academic tutoring, assessment and curriculum development. As Charlotte explained: *"that's when I started learning about those university boards that I'd never even heard of"*. Emma emphasised how much taking on these roles *"certainly raises your profile within the university"*. A clear link can be drawn here to the comments shown in Section 7.2.2 about *"going outside of the bubble"* (Barbara), feeling a sense of belonging to the institution and the institution seeming a bigger place.

The snowball effect

An interesting aspect to 'doors opening' was what three women explained as one opportunity leading to another. This was another way in which achieving their new status acted as a turning point, after which they experienced a type of snowball effect of opportunity and progression. As Alison said: *"I think I got identified early on as somebody who was an enthusiast, and then it snowballed in lots of different ways"*. Juliet said: *"So*

that's why it was the turning point, because… that was the first success which created the second which created the third… I was spurred on". As Charlotte described the various roles she was offered, she explained *"that kind of started a cascade… it kind of like, escalated"*. Given that confidence is highlighted as an issue in these findings (Section 5.2.7), it is noteworthy that Juliet stated: "*I do think that success […] self-creates, so if you have one it – it just gets a forward momentum on it"*. There is an overlap here with the increased confidence reported in Section 7.2.1 relating to a sense of internal prestige and validation.

7.2.4 Feeling valued

Feeling valued by the institution and appreciating the institution in return

This section explores the way in which the women felt valued by the institution for investing in and celebrating their achievements as teaching champions and the appreciation they felt towards the institution in return.

Seven of the fifteen women provided comments relating to this theme, evidencing that support for such recognition and awards schemes was deeply appreciated. They referenced incredible support, both centrally and within their Schools, and to being deeply touched by colleagues' messages of congratulations about their achievements. Kate described how *"my inbox just flooded with people saying congratulations… and… that was more powerful really than the award itself, I would say"*.

Gratitude towards the institution was also expressed in terms of the support systems and people in place to facilitate these senior teaching fellowship schemes, funded by the institution, for example:

> *But yeah, I am so – so I'm very grateful to the university and also we have [central support centre], I had [mentor's name] as well so again I had women helping me… yeah, I felt well supported* (Nicole).

Some of the women compared being valued here to not feeling valued as teachers in their previous institution or within their department/School. Tessa explained why she was so

enthusiastic about the way in which teaching excellence was celebrated and rewarded by the institution:

> *when I was at [previous institution]… I'd sort of reached a bit where I just couldn't see how I was going to develop anymore because there wasn't, there wasn't the mechanism, and it [teaching] wasn't celebrated… it's just been phenomenal [here], actually* (Tessa).

Another comparison was made by Nicole who believed that teaching awards were valued more here than by other institutions; this strengthened her appreciation of working within the institution. Meanwhile, Isabel appreciated that the institution had tried to create more equitable paths to promotion whereby it was possible to become a "real" Professor on a teaching intensive contract: *"I think we're very lucky at this university"*. She, too, contrasted this with other institutions she knew of, where teaching intensive and research paths still remained separate.

The powerful impact of feeling appreciated for the work you do was articulated by Juliet, who found that the *"opinions and the kind of evaluation that I actually value… comes from outside my department"* which had been healing for her: *"I spent too many years trying to gain the approval of everyone within my department which was never going to come… um, so I don't really mind, now"*. This has parallels with the comments shown in Section 7.2.1 about feeling a type of validation following the frustration of unsuccessful promotion attempts.

The theme of appreciating the institution also overlaps with Section 7.2.2 about a sense of belonging to a wider community of practice, captured by Donna who said her sense of community across the institution *"is stronger than my sense of community within the department"*. However, for Louise, rather than being helpful, it was deeply frustrating to compare her treatment by her School with the wider institution:

> *I'm recognised by the university but not within my own school... you know, I had to put myself forward for it... my own school is not recognising that but the university is [slight laugh]… it's really just wrong, wrong, wrong* (Louise).

Overall, many of the findings summarised in Section 7.2 about impact and benefits make it clear that the institutional investment in supporting professional recognition and reward for teaching resulted in a sense of being valued, of belonging and a strong sense of allegiance towards the institution by the women, as illustrated here:

> *I think – in organisations people stay not because of the money, but because they feel safe and secure and valued…And what institutions sometimes don't see is that these awards provide trust to people to stay rather than go* (Nicole).

Wanting to do useful work

Section 5.2.10 highlighted that doing useful work was an important value for the women, and Section 6.2.3 highlighted this was a motivating factor in applying for senior categories of teaching fellowships. Six of the women referenced doing useful work as an outcome from gaining their new status. For some, it had simply enabled them to support and mentor others, as they had hoped it would: *"it did enable me to encourage colleagues to go down that route"* (Samantha). Fiona organised an informal group of mentors in her School complete with a folder of sample applications: *"and we would lend the folder out to people and then get it back again"*. Others, such as Penny, found engaging with the pedagogic literature to be transformational for her own teaching practice, *"I found it a really valuable thing"* and highlighted the two-way process of supporting a colleague: *"and then in helping her see, I was seeing other stuff myself"*.

The high value the women placed on belonging to a community of practice (Section 7.2.2) also relates to their desire to do useful work in the institution. As Samantha explained, although her application was originally *"about challenging myself"* she had since found that *"some of it has also come back to networks and sharing and being able to pass it on"*. The gain for the institution was neatly summarised by Nicole: *"people who get this award, most of the time, do it not for career progression only, they do it because they want to give something back"*.

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter, which addresses the final research question, has summarised findings relating to the impact and benefits of achieving a new, special, teaching status for women who champion teaching within a research-intensive institution. Although the findings highlight a range of outcomes, some key themes can be identified. Overall, the women were strongly values-driven and for the majority, achieving their new teaching status was not an end-point but provided opportunities for useful and meaningful work within the institution such as to support others, to engage in teaching and learning strategy work and to network with others who share similar professional values. The women were mostly extremely positive about the benefits, which included a stronger sense of credibility and prestige, which was felt as internal and/or external, a stronger sense of belonging to the institution and increased confidence. Across all three findings chapters, there are interesting links to be drawn between notions of prestige, confidence, values and identity.

The findings from all three research questions will now be used to inform the discussion in the following chapter, Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 Discussion

8.1 Introduction

Using a feminist and interpretive paradigm this study set out to explore perceptions of prestige in relation to senior categories of teaching Fellowships (SFHEA, PFHEA, UTF and NTF) by women who teach and support learning in one HE institution in England. The use of case study research and visual and narrative methods, incorporating career journey maps and narrative interviews, were chosen to provide a rich, contextualised account of the career experiences of mid-career women within an environment where there is a persistent gender gap, where neoliberal management practices dominate, and research is perceived to be more highly valued than teaching. The study addresses a gap in the literature by examining the concept of prestige in relation to senior categories of teaching fellowships through a gendered lens. In doing so, the research aims to add to our understanding about the career experiences and challenges faced by mid-career women in a sector which is grappling with both a gender pay and leadership gap.

This chapter discusses the findings set out in Chapters 5-7 within the context of other relevant research in the field, linking back to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Following the same structure as the findings chapters, this discussion chapter is organised into three sections, one for each of the research questions.

8.2 RQ1: What can we learn from the career journeys of mid-career women who champion teaching in HE?

In keeping with feminist standpoint theory and narrative inquiry which shaped the research design, a contextualised approach was taken to the study. It means that key themes such as prestige and teaching awards were not explored in isolation, but as part of the lived experiences of mid-career women who champion teaching in the institution. As a result, the first research question takes a more holistic look at the career journeys of women in HE which helps set the context for the findings in relation to the following two research questions about prestige and impact of teaching awards.

A wide range of findings are reported in Chapter 5 for Research Question 1, and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to include them all; this section therefore discusses key findings in relation to the gender gap in HE.

8.2.1 Kaleidoscope careers and caring responsibilities

As mentioned in the literature review, previous studies have noted that women in HE tend not to strategically *plan* their careers to the extent that men do (Coate et al., 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2010). The findings in relation to this study are consistent with these claims. The non-linear nature of some of the women's career journey maps may be a reflection of this lack of planning. It was striking how many women in the study referred to luck, accident and serendipity when describing their career journeys, rather than to planning, goal setting or ability, a point which is also reflected in the literature and ascribed to modesty (Diezmann and Grieshaber, 2019). The findings appear to support findings from Doherty and Manfredi's study (2010, p.146) comparing career experiences of men and women leaders in HE, which noted that women appeared to stumble across jobs in an opportunistic way compared to the "focused and measured approach" taken by men, and had more limited career goals as a result.

These findings support the notion that women are likely to experience the "kaleidoscope careers" (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), "patchwork careers" (Sabelis & Schilling, 2013) and "non-linear careers" (Hewlett & Luce, 2005) described in the literature. Each of these terms, in different ways, capture a broken pattern of career progression due to lack of planning, part-time work or intermittent career breaks. The finding in this study about lack of planning is significant, because existing research makes clear that women's progression to senior leadership roles is unlikely to be accidental, and strategic career planning is therefore likely to be an important factor in addressing the gender gap (Dean, 2009; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019). This suggests that institutional investment in women only programmes such as Aurora and Springboard, which support women to set achievable career goals, may be helpful. Meanwhile, the findings reveal that for some women, the process of applying for professional recognition helpfully allowed them to take stock of their achievements to date and to identify gaps in their development. These findings enable us to tentatively suggest that engaging with the reflective process of applying for senior categories of teaching

fellowships might even help women to address a previous lack of strategic career planning. There is no clear support for this in the literature, although van der Sluis et al., (2017) found that participants in an HEA Fellowship scheme (at all categories) found applicants appreciated the chance to document achievements and career trajectories.

The study reveals that reasons given for a broken pattern of career progression are consistent with other research, such as women being more likely to take career breaks due to childbirth and other caring responsibilities (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010; Huppatz et al., 2019; Misra et al., 2012). References to challenges faced by mothers in the study especially reflect those articulated in other studies. These include maintaining a research and publication profile, not being able to attend conferences, fitting in maternity leave and always juggling to achieve a work-life balance (Huppatz et al., 2019; Misra et al., 2012; Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). Regret was expressed by respondents that it was so hard to be both a successful researcher and a parent, and having a family was expressed in terms of career sacrifices. Findings here also suggest that many women are still burdened by a "second shift" (Hochschild & Machung, 2012) or "double burden" (Cotterill et al., 2007) in terms of juggling a career alongside the lion's share of family and other caring duties at home.

The literature review highlighted that neoliberal management practices are blamed for promoting a "masculinised" culture of competition and performativity in which women struggle to progress (Acker & Wagner, 2019; Bagilhole & White, 2011; Fitzgerald, 2014; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; O'Connor, 2020; Savigny, 2014; White et al., 2011). Research paints a gloomy picture whereby achieving a work-life balance for women in HE is an impossible ideal (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010; Morley, 2013a; Toffoletti & Starr, 2016) with challenges being especially acute for working mothers (Huppatz et al., 2019; Misra et al., 2012; Toffoletti & Starr, 2016) and those in research intensive institutions (Misra et al., 2012). Meanwhile, Toffoletti and Starr (2016) and Huppatz et al., (2019) highlight a tension and a contradiction between the neoliberal, competitive culture in HE that requires long working hours, and the caring discourse underpinning so-called gender equity policies and flexible work practices promoted by HR departments. However, an unanticipated finding from this study, and in contrast to the literature cited here, is that despite the very real difficulties they articulated, working mothers were also positive in their outlook. Women

who had young families, or who had been in that position, relished that they were also able to work and considered things had improved for women compared to the past. They were pragmatic in terms of their goals and expectations and in contrast to Toffoletti and Starr (2016) and Huppatz et al., (2019), were deeply appreciative of, rather than cynical about, family-friendly policies offered by the institution, especially flexible working hours.

Related to this, references to personal struggle and inequality by the women in the study were often made casually, and with an air of acceptance. A possible explanation for this may be the influence of a postfeminist discourse promoting a "climate of equality" (Anderson, 2014; Bradley, 2013; Fine, 2010; Fitzgerald, 2014) as referenced in the literature review. For example, Toffoletti and Starr (2016) found that women were more likely to blame themselves for compromises required, and for any failure to achieve, rather than blame the neoliberal and masculinised culture within HE. Similarly, Coate et al., (2015) suggest that a culture of individualism, aligned to neoliberalism, downplays the role structural inequalities play at institutional and sector level. It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that there is scope for the institution to alleviate some of the individual pressure women may place on themselves.

The findings in this section also reflect research by Coate et al., (2015) and Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) that the picture is nuanced, and that women's kaleidoscope careers reflect their complex needs which are not entirely focused on career goals, but on other aspects of life, including a desire for authenticity, balance and a need to work in an environment which reflects their values and allows space for family life. In this way, the findings are also consistent with O'Neil et al., (2013) who highlight the importance of "holism" in women's careers to reflect that success is not only measured in terms of hierarchical career progression. Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) explain the kaleidoscope metaphor as a *positive* representation of the way women function in both work and non-work realms, with career patterns changing according to shifting priorities in their lives. This is similar to the reference by O'Neil et al. (2013) to women being "sprinters, marathoners and relay runners" at different stages of their careers, and to the various "push and pull factors" women encounter, referenced by Hewlett and Luce (2005). As Coate et al., (2015, p.7) express it, a complex set of emotional, values and family-related considerations are at play for mid-stage

career women in HE and these factors are "complex and fluid". This interplay of different factors is evidenced across the findings chapters, and is vividly illustrated in the study by Barbara dividing her career journey map into periods of being either "constrained" or "ambitious". In the study, some respondents were clearly ambitious, but none were interested in status for the sake of it, which supports research by Coate et al., (2015) and Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). These findings also substantiate claims by Coate et al., that it is a mistake to label women as either ambitious or not, because their priorities in life will shift at different times.

8.2.2 Progression, promotion and prestige

The literature review referred to widespread claims in the literature that there is a gendered division of teaching and research in HE (Bagilhole & White, 2011; Carvalho & de Lurdes Machado, 2010; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Morley, 2013a; Morley, 2014; Thomas & Davies, 2002). Data from the institution studied reflects these claims, showing that the majority of those on teaching-only contracts are women. Analysis from the narrative interviews also supports this picture. For example, the interviews revealed comments about research being a domain where women without children are more likely to thrive, and examples from women who had become "stuck" on fixed term and lower grade Teaching Fellow contracts whilst male colleagues had progressed to more secure teaching and research lectureships. Meanwhile, the sense from some of the women in the study that their male colleagues were somehow better able to navigate the system echoes references in the literature to women not knowing "the rules of the game" (Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Morley, 2012).

Data from the study evidenced that the women in teaching-intensive roles highly valued their work but expressed frustration that the academic labour involved in teaching and supporting learning is relatively invisible, and under-appreciated, compared to the more tangible outputs and esteem attached to research. In addition to experience of a gendered labour divide and promotions process, respondents also experienced casually condescending remarks about teaching from research active colleagues. Underpinning this culture is a gendered prestige economy where prestigious research activity is more highly rewarded than 'feminised' teaching and pastoral support roles (Carvalho & de Lurdes Machado, 2010;

Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006; Morley, 2014; Thomas & Davies, 2002). Therefore, a significant finding from this study, which broadly supports claims in other research, is that the culture of HE is "masculinised" (Cotterill, Jackson & Letherby, 2007; Fitzgerald, 2014; Savigny, 2014), that there is a gendered prestige economy (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018) and that the result can be both horizontal and vertical segregation for women (Huppatz & Goodwin, 2013).

Evidence from the study relating to a masculinised culture is also consistent with research about the existence of an academic boys' club in HE, favouring those on the inside (Bradley, 2013; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Morley, 2013a, 2014; Thomas & Davies, 2002). Accounts from the study about a promotions panel being "full of old white men", about senior management being "very white grey male" and about encountering only men during the entire promotions process appear to reflect references by Coate and Kandiko Howson (2016, p.576) to "an institutional homosocial culture" and by Savigny (2014) to "cultural sexism". A key point made in the literature about an institutional academic boys' club is that the term captures practices which are not always visible but are embedded, may be informal and are accepted as normal (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014). This also reflects the cultural sexism referred to by Savigny (2014, p.797) which she describes as "an everyday, ordinary, occurrence which takes place within masculinised hegemonic structures". It is visible in the gender pay and leadership gap, but in more subtle ways it is about power and exclusion (BlackChen, 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Manfredi et al 2014), where men are "the gatekeepers" (Fitzgerald, 2014, p.21) and women do not know the rules of the game (Fisher and Kinsey, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2014) and in this way a status quo of male privilege is maintained. In the study, this was evidenced through examples such as ambiguity about *how* to get promoted based on teaching, bafflement as to how male colleagues managed to negotiate such favourable terms and advice not to "rock the boat" by complaining. It should be noted that some women had proved very able to navigate the system, but the barriers encountered by some women had proved extremely stressful, with negative impacts on their health and well-being.

The results reported in this section, which corroborate the findings of a substantial body of research from across the sector, are despite efforts by the institution where the study took place to promote inclusivity and diversity and to tackle the gender, leadership and ethnicity gap. Prior to the study taking place, clearer progression routes were created for those on a teaching track, incorporating explicit criteria for applicants and panels about what evidence for teaching excellence might be (Cashmore et al., 2013; Cashmore & Ramsden, 2009; Chalmers, 2011; Locke, 2014) to tackle problems of non-transparency of promotion criteria (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016). Unfortunately, the findings reported in this section indicate that institutional policy and experience of the policy are not necessarily aligned. Furthermore, drawing on Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organisations, the findings reflect claims in research about how difficult it is to eradicate an embedded culture of male privilege which may be invisible on the surface (Bradley, 2013; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2014; Morley, 2006, 2013a, 2014; Savigny, 2014), aptly referred to as "gender asbestos" by Witternberg-Cox (2013), and a "cultural climate" or "hidden curriculum" by Morley (2014). The results suggest that inclusive policies alone will not suffice and there is further work to be done by the institution in terms of tackling an entrenched masculine culture.

8.2.3 Women-only professional development programmes

As outlined in the literature review, investment in women only professional development and leadership programmes is one way in which institutions are trying to rebalance the gender gap and feed the leadership pipeline. A key finding from the study in relation to such programmes is that, despite reservations by the Aurora participants before and during the programme, they had subsequently found it to be impactful and helpful for their career progression in tangible ways. This is consistent with other research which finds women only development programmes can foster positive transformational change (Coate et al., 2015; Debebe et al., 2016; DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014, 2016; Ely et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2018; White, 2003).

Women only leadership and professional development programmes are acknowledged in research to be controversial, partly by not being inclusive, but also because they imply a deficit approach of needing to 'fix the women' rather than tackling structural inequality

(Burkinshaw & White, 2017; Ely et al., 2011; Fletcher & Ely, 2003; Wittenberg-Cox, 2013), a discomfort which was also reflected by the women in the study.

An important approach taken in recent leadership programmes views leadership through an identity lens (Ely et al., 2011), helping women to *perceive* themselves as leaders within male dominated institutions. Programmes aim to nurture a leadership identity and a sense of agency in participants, encouraging them to be their authentic selves (DeFrank-Cole, 2016; Parker et al., 2018). Findings from this study evidence that the Aurora leadership programme was successful in achieving these aims, with all three of the Aurora participants in the study emphasising that it was the programme's coverage about leadership, including authentic leadership, which had been most impactful for them. The findings suggest that investment in such programmes by the institution is worthwhile, because the institution benefits too: Aurora had led to successful applications for more senior leadership roles and, as one participant explained, it had helped her focus on making the best use of her skills for the institution. These findings from the study are therefore in agreement with other research about the effectiveness of women only leadership development programmes in addressing the leadership pipeline problem.

In addition to the Aurora programme, the institution where the study took place invests each year in the Springboard women's development programme. Springboard is not specifically focused on leadership but, like leadership development programmes, it targets areas which research shows to be helpful for women, such as reviewing personal and professional achievements, goal setting and confidence issues. In an indirect way, therefore, there is an expectation that Springboard might also potentially reduce the leadership gap. The findings from this study about Springboard evidence that participants were appreciative of the experience, referencing helpful elements such as inspirational talks from women speakers, access to networks, and understanding about imposter syndrome. However, they were less clear than Aurora participants about the long-term benefits of the programme. This finding is possibly a reflection of Springboard's less-focused remit as a programme. It may also be because participants approach the programme less certain about what to gain, whereas access to the Aurora programme is based on a competitive application from those with leadership aspirations.

Despite being less clear about programme outcomes, Springboard participants were appreciative of the access to buddying and networking opportunities it provided. Examples included lunch meetings which lasted beyond the programme, learning about developments in other departments, and a research partnership with a Springboard "buddy" which had proved to be "a game changer" in career terms. These accounts support other research which finds formal, informal and cross-disciplinary networking to be an extremely helpful factor for women's career development and important in addressing the gender gap in HE (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2010; Parker et al., 2018; Pyke, 2013;) and is why networking and 'buddying' are included in Springboard.

8.2.4 Networking, mentoring and role models

Although networking, coaching and mentoring are also key elements of the Aurora programme as well as of Springboard, the Aurora participants in this study did not reference this aspect themselves in relation to the programme. However, a key finding from the study is that across all the career journey maps and narrative interviews, a majority referenced the value of mentoring. Many of the women gave detailed and moving accounts about the powerful impact of influential mentors during their careers. Even if the relationship had been from many years ago, it still resonated. These findings are consistent with other research which finds mentoring for women to be extremely valuable (de Vries, 2011; de Vries et al., 2006; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Singh et al., 2009). Findings about the value of networking and mentoring appear to also confirm claims by Flemming and Nelson (2007) who found that communities established on social bonds, shared values and non-hierarchical relationships are especially appreciated by women, because "relationships are important to women's psychological and social development as well as their identity and sense of self" (p.20). Findings from the study further indicate that mentoring has a positive impact on confidence levels through being believed in and encouraged by someone else. This is consistent with research which shows mentoring can address a lack of role models for women and a lack of confidence (Bynum, 2015; de Vries, 2011; de Vries et al., 2006; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2010; Hutchins, 2015; Searby et al., 2015). Related to mentoring, research also highlights the importance of providing role models in addressing the gender gap in HE (Dean, 2009; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019), a

point which was also reflected in the data for this study. Two specific references were made to female Teaching and Learning Deans being inspirational as role models, and other comments highlight that valued mentor figures inadvertently act as role models too, inspiring the desire to be good mentors to others in return.

Taken together, the findings about networking, mentoring and role models are relevant to the challenges identified for women in navigating a prestige economy where an academic boys' club operates and from which women can feel isolated (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014). The findings are also relevant to Bourdieusian theory about career capital. Social capital, realised through social connections and visibility, and cultural capital, incorporating prestige, inner confidence and knowing the rules, are identified as important forms of career capital in supporting career advancement, especially progression to senior leadership roles (Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2014, 2016; Jayashree et al., 2020). It is noteworthy that networking is articulated in the literature as "career building blocks" by Doherty and Manfredi (2010), "developmental networks" by Parker et al., (2018) and expressed as a "web of inclusion" by Helgesen (1995, p.20, cited by DeFrank-Cole et al., 2015, p.32), directly reflecting the benefits offered by networking. Overall, two recommendations for practice can be drawn from these findings. Firstly, that institutional programmes which incorporate networking, mentoring and coaching relationships are worthwhile and should be continued. Secondly, that institutions might consider other initiatives to strengthen opportunities for networking and mentoring for women.

8.2.5 Identity, values and belonging

Teacher and academic identities are complex, shaped by context and always shifting (Clarke et al., 2013; Quigley, 2011; Skelton, 2012) and it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed account of identity issues. Few of the women in the study discussed identity per se, but many reflected on overlapping issues, such as values and a sense of belonging.

The literature review highlighted the potentially negative impact of neoliberal managerialism on academic identity, including the "rival ideologies" of research and teaching (Barnett, 2003). The language used in this respect is gloomy, depicting "traditional" academic identity

as being under threat and academic staff suffering from low morale and stress (Archer, 2008; Beck & Young, 2005; Churchman & King, 2009; Davies & Petersen, 2005; Flecknoe et al., 2017; Skelton, 2012). It is therefore not surprising that some women in the study did struggle with issues relating to identity as teachers in a research-intensive environment, experiencing condescending behaviour from research-focused colleagues, feelings of imposter syndrome and of not belonging within their departments. There are striking similarities between these results and those identified by Skelton (2012) and Flecknoe (2017). For example, participants in a study by Flecknoe (2017) feared being regarded as second-class academics or failed researchers through their commitment to teaching, and both Flecknoe (2017) and Skelton (2012, p.36) found participants in their studies experienced "feelings of isolation and non-belonging", particularly within their own disciplines. Skelton (2012, p.36) warns against dismissing the identity struggles of teachers in research-intensive institutions as "individual complaints" because barriers can be real and commonplace. Flecknoe (2017) emphasises the importance of looking after those who do most of the teaching within the institution. In general, these results further support the warnings highlighted in the literature review about a lack of inclusivity for teaching staff in HE and the importance of providing routes for reward and recognition for them (Cashmore et al., 2013; Fung & Gordon, 2014; Locke, 2014; Locke et al., 2016). The importance of feeling a sense of belonging is returned to again in Section 8.4.4.

However, a positive finding from analysis was that many women in the study, in contrast to the deep pessimism highlighted in the literature review, were finding ways to juggle the competing demands of maintaining a teacher identity within a research-intensive institution. They accepted that research was more highly valued in their institution but displayed resilience and optimism and were finding ways to establish a career profile they were proud of. This finding clearly aligns with a study by Clegg (2008) who challenges the doom expressed about neoliberal managerialism and identity, finding that academics could maintain strong and distinct identities whereby they found their own meaning and sense of agency "despite all the pressure of performativity" (p.343).

Related to identity, an important finding from the study was the extent to which the women expressed a strong sense of values in terms of what they cared about in their work and in

their lives; values were subtly interwoven throughout their narratives. This finding about values supports previous research, which was highlighted in the literature review, that women may typically value meaningful work, self-fulfilment and "adding value" over leadership ambitions (Coate et al., 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Flemming & Nelson, 2007; O'Neil et al., 2013; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). This is potentially significant because research also indicates there may be a correlation between being connected to one's authentic values and achieving resilience around identity that was revealed in the study. For example, Clegg (2008) found the participants in her study were able to maintain a positive sense of identity and optimism by focusing on what was personally meaningful and of value to them. Similarly, Harland and Pickering (2011) invited teaching staff to reflect on their values in a neoliberal, research-focused HE climate and found that greater awareness about values had a positive impact on their teaching life. Values are a key part of our professional identity (Henkel, 2005) and yet are rarely included in discussions about higher education practice and development (Harland and Pickering, 2011; Macfarlane, 2004). Given that the women in the study were closely connected to their values, a tentative conclusion from these results is that further research into the role and importance of values in women's careers may deepen our understanding about how to support women and reduce the gender gap.

This discussion of findings for RQ1 reveals a complex and nuanced picture of women's career journeys, including barriers and enablers. The diagram presented in Figure 8.1 may be helpful in presenting a summary of the key factors discussed thus far:
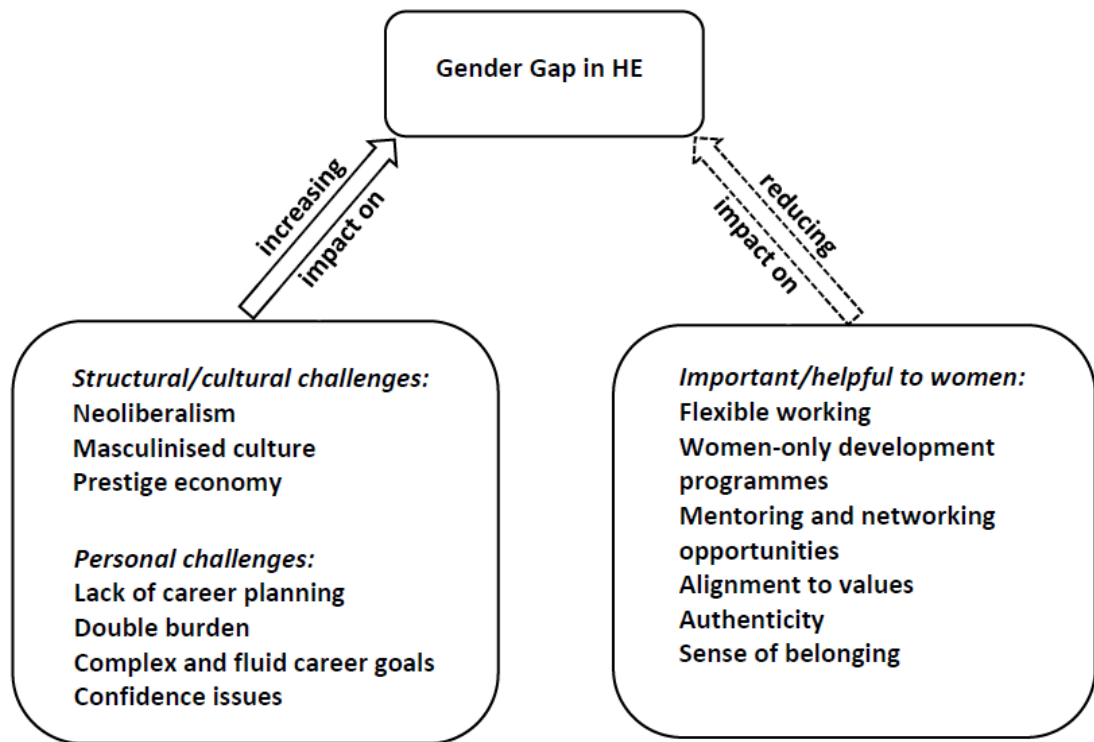
Figure 8.1 Factors to emerge from RQ1 shaping women's career journeys in HE

8.3 RQ2: What prestige, if any, do mid-career women associate with senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

Following on from the previous section which addressed Research Question 1 and provided some wider context about the career journeys of women in HE, the next section of this chapter considers findings in relation to Research Question 2. This question explores notions of prestige associated with senior categories of teaching fellowships. The section is divided into two parts to enable discussion about the extent to which prestige was a motivating factor *for* applying for the awards and discussion about notions of prestige by the women *after* applying.

8.3.1 Motivations for applying beforehand – a kind of prestige

As highlighted in the literature review chapter, the literature on professional recognition and teaching awards is a relatively new and developing body of research, where to date the main focus has been on evaluating the schemes which support such awards (see, for example,

Austen et al., 2018; Botham, 2018; Frame et al., 2006; Peat, 2015; Rickinson et al., 2012; Shaw, 2018; Spowart et al., 2016, 2019, 2020; Thornton, 2014; Turner et al., 2013; van der Sluis et al., 2016, 2017). Motivation is thus far an under-explored theme in research about professional recognition. This is partly because professional recognition has become conflated with top-down institutional accountability, fellowship target-setting, progression and promotion policy (Botham, 2018; Layton & Brown, 2011; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Peat, 2015; Spowart et al., 2016, 2019; Shaw, 2018; van der Sluis, 2016; Thornton, 2014; Warnes, 2020) resulting in attention to individual motivation being overridden by these agendas to some extent. Given that understanding about the prestige economy emerged from research into motivation and reward in academic life (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011a, 2011b, 2012) it is appropriate to explore notions of prestige through the motivations behind applying for a senior category of teaching fellowship.

Findings from the study reveal that the motivations given for applying for senior categories of teaching fellowships can be divided into three categories. The first category can be broadly described as value-driven reasons which relate to a sense of identity and belonging and to supporting one's own and others' professional development. This is consistent with research which indicates that women are highly motivated by work which is meaningful and "adds value" to the institution and others (Coate et al., 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; O'Neil et al., 2013; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). Examples provided from the study in relation to reasons for applying include wanting to engage in self-reflection and scholarship, addressing issues around identity for those who were non-academics, supporting less experienced colleagues, hoping to join a community of practice with others who care about teaching and wanting to use an enhanced profile to do useful work within the institution. The findings in this respect clearly reflect those by Botham (2018) who found that gaining professional recognition, including raising one's profile and improving self-esteem as a teaching expert, was a key motivational factor, and findings by Spowart et al., (2016) who identified raising one's profile within the community as a motivating factor.

Those on non-academic contracts tended to fall into this first category of motivations. Women on professional services contracts pointed out that achieving the award was unlikely to facilitate an upwards progression as they faced more limited opportunities in terms of

reward and promotion than those on academic contracts, as highlighted by Locke (2014) and Locke et al., (2016). Instead, these women emphasised the importance of gaining such awards in terms of identity and belonging, because they could demonstrate a shared language about teaching with their academic colleagues, including through the language of the UKPSF. Alongside those on teaching intensive contracts without a PhD, they hoped the award might strengthen their credibility and counter a feeling of being "on the outside". This finding echoes a similar finding by Cathcart et al., (2021) about HEA Fellows in non-traditional roles reporting that they gained a sense of belonging from their new status. The motivations in this category are not explicitly focused on prestige but there is an implicit connection between prestige and factors such as credibility, profile and identity. These connections are explored further in Section 8.4 in relation to impact of gaining a senior category of teaching fellowship.

The second category of motivation for applying which the data revealed also relates to prestige in an indirect way, because it relates to a perceived *lack* of prestige attached to teaching and the desire to make it somehow count for more. The study revealed a frustration by respondents about the lower status of teaching within the institution and the invisibility of achievements in teaching compared to the relative visibility and greater prestige attached to research outputs. For some of the women, the fellowship application was an opportunity to document their cumulative teaching achievements which gave precious visibility to their work. They viewed the application process as a way of positively countering a perception that the hard labour of teaching goes unrecognised and that "teaching doesn't count", particularly for those in teaching support or teaching intensive roles who already feel on the outside. This finding is in direct alignment to the same frustration expressed extensively in previous studies, and highlighted in the literature review, about the imbalance between the value placed on research compared to teaching in academia (Crook, 2014; Fairweather, 2005; Fung & Gordon, 2016; Gibbs & Habeshaw, 2002; Greenbank, 2006; Grove, 2013; Macfarlane, 2011; Parker, 2008; White et al., 2011; Young, 2006).

The findings about motivation and prestige highlighted so far highlight how important it is for those who support teaching and learning but have limited opportunities for recognition

via formal mechanisms, such as promotion, to have access to alternative routes to recognition. This is absolutely in agreement with research which warns that the traditional academic routes to career progression are not sufficiently inclusive for today's stratified HE sector (Cashmore et al., 2013; Fung & Gordon, 2014; Locke, 2014; Locke et al., 2016). The importance of providing routes for reward and recognition for those who promote teaching quality is highlighted extensively in the literature, but so also is acknowledgement that progress is slow (Cashmore et al., 2013; Cashmore & Ramsden, 2009; Cashmore & Scott, 2009; Fung & Gordon, 2016; HEA, 2013; Land & Gordon, 2015; Locke, 2014; Locke et al., 2016; Spowart et al., 2020).

The third category of findings regarding motivation relates more directly to prestige. Analysis shows that some women identified a senior category of teaching fellowship as an opportunity to distinguish themselves within their School/the institution or before a promotions panel as a teaching champion and/or expert. Within the institution where the study took place, HEA Fellowship at Descriptor 2 is a standard requirement for promotion to Associate Professor and Professor titles. Achievement of a *senior* category of teaching fellowship (at Descriptor 3 or 4) is therefore considered "above and beyond" which might help an applicant to stand out from other colleagues, and thus gain prestige. The women in the study were very aware that these awards have value for the institution. Applicants to professional recognition schemes are aware that in a competitive HE market, their institution needs to evidence teaching quality and expertise at student open days, in league tables and in TEF submissions (Spowart et al., 2016; van der Sluis, 2016). As Charlotte reflected, "I knew that if I got [award] that would definitely help my case to get grade 8 so I kind of played the game".

The findings in respect to this third category of motivation are consistent with findings by Spowart et al., (2016) who specifically explored motivations behind applying for HEA Fellowships and found that academics were mostly responding to institutional agendas. In other words, that study found clear awareness about the value of Fellowships to factors such as student recruitment, programme marketing, job security and career enhancement. The findings here are also in line with links made between HEA Fellowships, motivation and promotion described elsewhere in the literature, for example, by Thornton (2014); Spowart

et al., (2019); van der Sluis, (2016, 2021) and Shaw, (2018). Underpinning this is a neoliberal approach to management in HE which was highlighted in the introduction and literature review (Ball, 2012; BIS, 2012; Lynch, 2015; Molesworth et al., 2009). Evidence that institutions attach prestige to such fellowships is reflected in the significant sector-wide investment into professional recognition and awards schemes in the past decade (Austen et al., 2018; Spowart et al., 2020; Thornton, 2014). At a local level, where the study took place, such evidence is reflected in central funding for HEA Fellowship, UTF and NTF schemes, in the institution seeking out potential NTF applicants each year and supporting them through the process with mentoring and feedback, and in the celebration of such awards at annual teaching and learning events.

8.3.2 Notions of prestige after applying

Results from the study about notions of prestige after applying are presented in this section from three angles: evidence of prestige is considered at the individual, institutional and sector level.

The study reveals there was stronger awareness about prestige factors for women *after* they had achieved their new status, when they were able to reflect on the real impact and experience of gaining their award. Again, respondents did not always specifically refer to "prestige" but articulated it in terms related to prestige through the pride they felt, for example feeling a sense of validation, feeling less on the outside, that their achievement was "an important thing", "a badge of honour" or they felt "ridiculously proud". It is noticeable that a feeling of "validation" is also referenced in other studies as an impact of achieving teaching awards, for example, Botham (2018), Cathcart et al., (2021) and Shaw (2018).

For some in this study, their pride translated into a concept of prestige which was internal, with references to "a quiet pride", "professional self-esteem", "inward facing prestige" and "part of my armour". There are parallels between this finding and the way in which the concept of prestige is articulated in the literature on the prestige economy. As Coate and Kandiko Howson (2016, p.573) explain, prestige is defined and measured via "indicators of esteem" which are realised through factors such as "honour, respect and standing". Similarly, these references are reflected in research which evaluates the impact of senior

teaching award schemes, for example an NTF in Rickinson et al.'s study (2012, p.15) refers to gaining "clout, kudos and credibility"; the majority of female NTFs in a study by Frame et al., (2006) felt an increased sense of pride; a study of NTFs by Austen et al. (2018, p.8) found evidence of "kudos and status for individuals" and Eccles and Bradley's (2014, 2015, n.d.) study of SFHEA and PFHEAs found an increased sense of credibility.

This finding about women in the study feeling that they had gained an element of prestige is significant. As outlined in the introduction and literature review, recent research finds many women in academia have less prestige as a starting point with which to trade, and have less access to, or less time to dedicate to, prestige-seeking activities and are therefore disadvantaged in a gendered prestige economy (Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Morley, 2014) which in turn will impact on career capital. The finding outlined here indicates that gaining senior categories of teaching awards can support women in academia to accrue some prestige, or at least to *feel* that they have, which may impact positively on confidence, habitus and career capital. This suggestion is explored in greater detail in Section 8.4 in relation to Research Question 3.

The study reveals that prestige was also signalled through the institutional response to these awards. The institution where the study took place holds annual events where such awards are celebrated with senior staff present; women also referred to having their photographs taken and shared on the staff website and receiving congratulatory emails from senior colleagues. Great appreciation was expressed about this positive response. The comment by Kate, that her inbox flooding with messages of congratulations was more powerful than the award itself echoes a recipient's comment in a study by Warnes (2020, p.172) about congratulatory emails from managers that 'it was really nice… really, really lovely'. In contrast, Frame et al., (2006) found that award recipients who felt their achievements were ignored rather than celebrated believed their award lacked value in the institution, attributing this to an institutional bias towards research.

As already highlighted in Section 8.3.1., findings revealed that the women were aware of how their senior teaching fellowship can translate into a type of prestige for the institution, for example in metrics terms. For some, this underpinning neoliberal agenda was a source of

regret, and it detracted from the value they attached to their award. Comments here reflected a level of cynicism and scepticism about prestige factors, for example feeling that whilst their award was valued, *they* were not, because it was all about "stats on paper" (Donna). These voices were in the minority, but they reflect a similar concern expressed in the literature about metrics and performativity underpinning professional recognition and award schemes (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Shaw, 2018; Spowart et al., 2019; Warnes, 2020). For example, that recognition might be seen as a type of numbers game or corporate excellence where winners are paraded at open days and useful for marketing purposes (Peat, 2015; Thornton, 2014; Warnes, 2020). In general, the concern expressed in the literature is much stronger than that articulated by the women in the study.

The literature suggests that an institutional bias towards valuing research can sometimes mean that demonstrating such a public commitment to teaching by gaining these awards can even be unhelpful, resulting in the opposite of prestige. Chism (2006, p.589) refers to teaching awards being "the kiss of death" within research institutions, whilst Frame et al., (2006, p.414) asks whether becoming an NTF is "a reward or a millstone", Skelton (2004, p.454) refers to it being a "poisoned chalice" and Rickinson et al., (2012) refers to some winners experiencing a backlash. The findings in the study did not reflect these negative views, with only one woman in the study (Juliet) believing that a senior teaching fellowship could be "a debit point" in her research-focused School. Overall, the women perceived that even if the award was not valued at School level, it *was* valued by the institution. In general, the findings about institutional response suggest that institutional buy-in is key to value and prestige being attached to such awards, a point echoed by Spowart et al., (2016) who describes involvement from senior leaders as "pivotal".

Finally, the findings also reveal that at sector level prestige is attached to the awards, demonstrated by invitations which swiftly followed announcements of new senior teaching fellowships: one to be a doctoral supervisor and another to give a keynote. Doctoral supervision and giving conference keynotes, along with editing journals, publishing in high status journals and winning large research grant income, is precisely the type of esteemed activity which is said in the literature to carry value in the prestige economy (Blackmore, 2016a, 2016b; Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011a, 2012). The invitations received add further

evidence that gaining senior categories of teaching fellowships can help women to accrue prestige for teaching excellence in a gendered prestige economy which typically values research-based achievements (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Morley, 2014).

8.4 RQ3: How do mid-career women articulate the impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

Section 8.2 of this chapter discussed key findings in relation to Research Question 1 about the career journeys of mid-career women in HE, whilst Section 8.3 discussed a summary of findings in relation to Research Question 2 about notions of prestige. This section, Section 8.4, now addresses Research Question 3 to review findings about the impact and benefits resulting from senior categories of teaching fellowships. Themes from Sections 8.2 and 8.3 are re-visited, including finding a voice, doors opening, feeling valued, identity and belonging, increased confidence, habitus and prestige, and career capital. It will be shown how the concept of prestige is relevant to all these themes, whilst the interplay between prestige, teaching awards and career capital is highlighted. The relationship between themes is summarised in Figure 8.2 below:
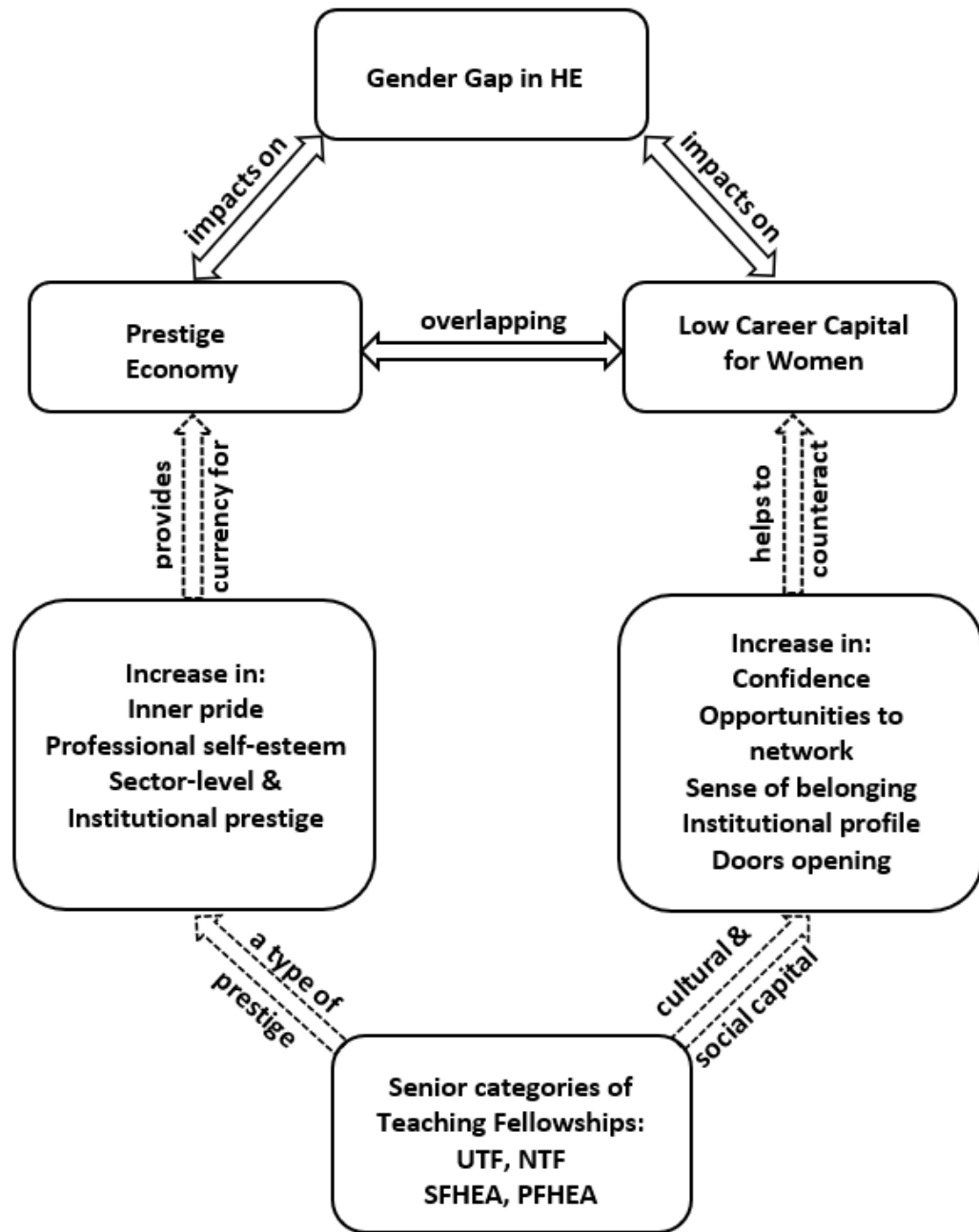
Figure 8.2 The interplay between teaching awards, prestige, and career capital

The upper half of Figure 8.2 captures the problem which is underpinning this study: that there is a gender gap in HE, and that the prestige economy and low career capital contribute to this problem. Career capital incorporates a range of capitals including social and cultural capital, and habitus, with the prestige economy existing as both separate and overlapping. The diagram depicts the relationship between the gender gap, the prestige economy and low career capital as two-way, to capture that the problems generated by the gender gap, a

lack of prestige and low career capital can become both self-perpetuating and a vicious cycle, in the same way that Bourdieu's concept of either lacking capital or accumulating capital, becomes repeated. The lower half of Figure 8.2 is unpacked in Sections 8.4.1 – 8.4.6 below.

8.4.1 Finding a voice

Analysis of the data reveals that the process of applying for senior teaching fellowships was helpful in drawing out a sense of pride and prestige which emerged for some women, and in some cases was even empowering. The application process for all these senior awards requires a rich contextualised and reflective account to be submitted rather than a descriptive list of achievements. Findings from the study suggest that the process of reflecting upon and articulating their achievements in teaching helped applicants to overcome modesty and claim individual credit, helped them to find their voice and to realise that their different teaching achievements amounted to something substantial and of value and, in one participant's case, even helped her understand herself a little better. The women referred to the difficulty of articulating teaching success and impact, which can seem intangible, and this is perhaps also why laying down their teaching stories was seen as significant. For those applying for HEA Fellowships rather than NTF or UTF, the UKPSF was also cited as helpful in providing a shared language through which to express their achievements. These findings are reflected in Figure 8.2 in the lower right-hand box, summarised as "confidence".

The finding about discovering one's voice is consistent with findings about the NTF Scheme by Skelton (2004) and Brown (2011). For example, Sadler (in Brown, 2011, p.6) refers to "suddenly finding a confidence and a voice", and Walker-Gleaves (in Brown, 2011, p.19) refers to finding a voice with which to innovate and challenge. It is important to note that applicants within the institution where the study took place are supported throughout the process, with an experienced mentor who will talk through the application and provide feedback on a draft. An implication of the finding here is that this institutional investment in support during the application process is worthwhile, and should be continued, and may be especially helpful for women who have previously undervalued their own achievements as teaching champions.

Section 8.3 explored the way in which women in the study associated prestige with achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships, showing that prestige was a factor at both an external and internal level. Related to prestige, and to the section above on finding a voice, data from the study shows that many of the women felt they gained credibility after achieving their award, and an increased profile as an authority on teaching. This finding is at the heart of the original question underpinning this research about whether senior categories of teaching awards help women to gain prestige. The women provided examples of how their awards had created new opportunities at School, institutional and sector level. Examples provided included chairing committees, contributing to communities of practice, advising on teaching policy and "giving back" to the award schemes as mentors or assessors; others had achieved promotion or had the courage to apply for new and more challenging roles. Several viewed achieving their new status as a career turning point, which aligns with other studies about the NTFS, including Rickinson et al., (2012, p.24) where recipients refer to their award creating opportunities and being "genuinely life-changing", and Rolfe (2018) who refers to it being life-changing and confidence building for individuals, and Quinsee and Jones-Devitt (2018, p.20) who summarise the NTFS as "transformative".

As they had made clear when discussing their motivations to apply (Section 8.3.1), almost none of the women had ever viewed their new title as an end point, so these doors opening fitted with their original motivations to prove themselves, to do useful work and to develop professionally. Some of the women explained how their increased profile led to a type of snowball effect, as a "cascade", where one opportunity then led to another. As Juliet explained, "success […] self-creates […] it just gets a forward momentum on it". Success here is equivalent to prestige. This snowball effect, or cascade, is precisely the effect which underpins the prestige economy described by Blackmore and Kandiko (2011a; 2011b; 2012) and which draws on Bourdieusian concepts of capital: that is, the more prestige you have within academia, the more you can accrue. Clearly, as captured in Figure 8.2, some of the women found that achieving a senior category of teaching fellowship set them on a path where they saw their profile increase, and opportunities open up. Considering the difficulties women can encounter in accruing prestige (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson,

2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Morley, 2014), this finding is significant and should be of interest to leadership teams and HR professionals in HE who are grappling with a persistent gender gap.

8.4.3 Feeling valued and being of value

A further important finding from the study is that the women felt deeply appreciative of the institutional investment in professional recognition and award schemes, which helped them to feel valued for their work and achievements. Investment included central funding for the schemes, high-quality support and feedback provided by fellowship mentors, and institutional celebration of awards. For some women, this countered previous feelings of being under-valued for prioritising teaching in a research-focused environment, either within their department/School or previous institution. A related finding is that the institution benefitted from this too, on multiple levels. For example, for some women, a sense of being valued translated into a feeling of allegiance and loyalty to the institution; as Nicole said, "these awards provide trust to people to stay rather than go". As the findings Chapter 7 revealed, some of the women had felt spurred on to apply for new and challenging roles, whilst others were "giving back" to the institution in a range of teaching-related roles. In Figure 8.2, the positive sense of feeling valued is represented across both the lower left and right-hand boxes.

These findings provide further evidence of the importance of institutional buy-in to professional recognition and teaching award schemes, described by Spowart et al., (2016) as "pivotal". Meanwhile, the literature review highlighted concern about such schemes being managerially driven, lacking real meaning or value (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Spowart et al., 2019; Thornton, 2014; van der Sluis et al., 2016; Warnes, 2020) and "tokenistic" (Peat, 2015). However, a tentative conclusion from the impact described here is that schemes can transcend these concerns and represent both prestige and meaning for recipients whilst also benefiting the institution in terms of metrics and staff loyalty. This appears to echo a similar finding by Cathcart et al., (2021) that HEA Fellowship schemes *can* move beyond being "a performative exercise" and benefit both individuals and the institution. This finding should be of particular interest currently, when HE institutions are under intense pressure, are short of funding and are already asking so much from their staff.

8.4.4 Identity and belonging

The findings in Section 8.2.5 highlighted some of the challenges faced by women in the study around identity and a sense of belonging as teacher-focused staff in a research-intensive institution. An unanticipated but clear finding from analysis was that, following their award, many women felt a strong sense of belonging to the fellowship communities of practice they joined. The institution where the study took place supports a community of practice for SFHEAs, another for UTFs and a shared community of practice for PFHEAs and NTFs together. The women spoke warmly about the resulting sense of kinship with like-minded individuals they found there, many of whom were also women. They appreciated the collegiality and friendship and felt it was a place where they shared a language and could grow professionally. Feeling part of a community of practice also helped them to feel connected to the wider institution and feel invested in it. For some, this feeling was powerful and healing, and countered a sense of not belonging to their department or discipline community. Findings about a sense of belonging are reflected in Figure 8.2 in the lower right-hand box as 'opportunities to network' and 'sense of belonging' but the positive impact on identity is also captured in both lower boxes in Figure 8.2, as 'sector-level and institutional prestige' and 'institutional profile'.

These results are remarkably similar to those found in studies by Skelton (2012) and Flecknoe et al., (2017) who found that academics on a teaching path found great value and meaning in teaching communities of practice, which provided a sense of belonging, countered isolation from the discipline community, and became a place for a shared language where learning could happen. MacKenzie et al., (2010) also highlight the importance of learning communities for those in teaching focused roles in research intensive universities. Similarly, Cathcart et al., (2021) found evidence of extended peer networks and an enhanced sense of belonging to a community of practice through gaining HEA Fellowship, identifying a collegial, community-led approach based on peer engagement and support as key ingredients to the enduring success of such schemes. The findings also reflect Wenger's work on communities of practice and identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Wenger, 1998). For Wenger, there is an important connection between identity and practice; communities of practice not only enable negotiation of meaning and

learning to take place, but development of identities, and belonging (Wenger & Trayner, 2015). For Kogan (2009, p.9) also, a sense of belonging to and interacting with others is important to how we develop our professional identity, it is about becoming an "embedded individual" within a community of shared language and values, which makes us stronger. Henkel (2005) and Archer (2008), who explore academic identity in the face of neoliberalism, make a similar connection, believing our academic identity is realised through our interaction with our discipline and the HE institution. As Archer (2008) highlights, it can be problematic if the values of the institution are at odds with our own, which perhaps explains why the sense of belonging to the communities of practice found in the study was found to be so powerful. A further possible explanation, which was not articulated, was that these communities of practice compensated for a sense of exclusion from the academic boys' club which this study found some evidence of and was highlighted in the literature review (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014).

Several tentative recommendations might be drawn from these findings about the beneficial role of communities of practice. Firstly, that communities of practice may be especially valuable for women who, as was highlighted in the literature review, have been found to prioritise authenticity, meaningful work and collegial relationships over leadership ambitions (Coate et al., 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Flemming & Nelson, 2007; O'Neil et al., 2013; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). It also seems appropriate to suggest that communities of practice may be especially fortifying for women in terms of developing identity: building confidence, countering feelings of imposter syndrome through a sense of belonging and providing access to networking (see also Section 8.4.5). Meanwhile, findings about the helpful role communities of practice might play should be of interest to policy makers, academic developers and people development teams in HE who, as has already been highlighted, may be finding it challenging to engage and support staff in the current highly pressured climate. Finally, teacher identity in HE is an under-researched area (Flecknoe et al., 2017; Hockings et al., 2009); therefore exploring this in relation to gender and communities of practice might be a helpful area for future research.

8.4.5 Confidence and habitus

This study set out to explore whether senior categories of teaching fellowships provided access to prestige for women in HE, in an audit-driven, neoliberal climate which requires evidence of teaching quality and teaching expertise to attract students even in research-intensive institutions. The literature review laid out the myriad ways in which indicators of academic esteem may be more easily accrued by male academics in a prestige economy (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Morley, 2014) and in a masculinised HE culture (Fitzgerald, 2014; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Savigny, 2014). A clear finding for this study, captured in the lower left-hand section of Figure 8.2 and drawn out across the sections of this discussion chapter, has revealed that in different ways, the women felt they gained a type of prestige by achieving their new fellowship status. As captured in the lower right-hand section of Figure 8.2, a related and significant finding is that a sense of prestige, in turn, impacted positively on academic identity and increased confidence levels. Many of the women *felt* in a better place as an outcome of achieving their new status, even those who already felt confident. This aligns with findings in other studies, which also find an increase in confidence as an outcome of achieving a teaching award, sometimes expressed as a sense of validation (Botham, 2018), of affirmation about one's practice (Shaw, 2018), or an increased sense of belonging, self-efficacy and professional identity (Cathcart et al., 2021).

The literature review highlighted how the concept of the prestige economy in HE (Blackmore & Kandiko, 2011a, 2011b; 2012) is linked to academic identity which draws on Bourdieu's ideas about cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986; 1988). Habitus is formed through social processes, and aspects of habitus, such as self-confidence and identity, are therefore not fixed and can change over time. A tentative suggestion arising from this research is that habitus, for many of the women, shifted due to achieving their award and the outcomes that followed. This change was sometimes only subtle and was not always articulated in terms of confidence, or identity, but as stated above, many of them *felt* in a better place as an outcome of achieving their new status. A number of factors were at play: the previous sections in this chapter have highlighted a sense of internal pride or validation, increased self-esteem, a stronger profile, finding a voice and feeling valued. For others, strength was

drawn from membership to the fellowship communities of practice, from feeling a sense of belonging with like-minded colleagues and from the friendships and networking opportunities that resulted.

These findings matter because confidence, self-belief, and therefore habitus, matter. The literature review highlighted some of the confidence issues associated with career women, including imposter syndrome (Kets de Fries, 2005; Young, 2011) and claims that confidence issues may be exacerbated by a masculinised, competitive HE culture (Blalock, 2014; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Hutchins, 2015; Parkman, 2016). Furthermore, the literature review highlighted that it can be extremely difficult for women to develop self-belief as leaders in a culture which appears not to support them (Ely et al., 2011). Crucially, confidence was found to be the quality women cited most as supporting their career progression to the top (Blalock, 2014) whilst low confidence levels have been found to negatively impact on staff well-being and retention (Hutchins, 2015; Ket de Vries, 2005; Parkman, 2016). The findings in this study indicate that some women gained a sense of agency by achieving their new status, positively impacting on confidence, identity and, therefore, habitus. The factors which contributed to these findings about confidence should be of interest to the institution where the study took place and to the sector, which continues to search for ways to address the "leaky pipeline" (McKinsey, 2017b) and continues to invest in development programmes for women, such as Aurora and Springboard, which incorporate initiatives to build participants' self-belief.

8.4.6 Prestige and career capital

An important finding from the study is that many of the women appeared to gain career capital through their changed status, because the outcomes relating to prestige and habitus are relevant to the wider concept of career capital, of which these other elements are a part. This connection is summarised in the right-hand sections of Figure 8.2. As outlined in the literature review, career capital represents the combined types of capital – human, social, and cultural – that are deemed important for senior career progression (Duberley & Cohen, 2010; Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2014, 2016; Jayashree et al., 2020). A tentative suggestion is that the benefits some of the women gained from doors opening and from belonging to the fellowship communities of practice are aligned to the type of network building and visibility

which is associated with social capital. Likewise, it is cautiously suggested that the findings about increased prestige also resulted in enhanced cultural capital, for example through a strengthened institutional profile. This study indicates that the cumulative benefits of their new status generated an increase in career capital for many of the women in the form of a forward career momentum which was both transformative and self-creating in terms of further opportunities. This is closely aligned to Bourdieu's (1986) ideas about the possession of capital being linked to opportunity, with a lack of capital being a constraint and more capital being an enabler: as Charlotte said, it started "a cascade" and Alison said, "it snowballed".

As an all-encompassing concept which incorporates a set of interconnected capitals, career capital might be especially important to women. Not surprisingly, research shows that women may find it harder to accumulate career capital compared to male colleagues (Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2014, 2016; Jayashee, 2020) in the same way that they find it hard to accrue academic prestige. These tentative findings about career capital are therefore highly relevant to the problem of the gender gap underpinning this study. It was striking, when reviewing the literature for this thesis, how little research exists about gender and career capital, and a recommendation from this study is that this is an important and worthwhile area for future research.

8.5   Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some of the key findings from the research, organised according to the three research questions. The first research question highlighted some of the challenges faced by women in HE, many of which resonate with existing research, such as juggling careers with caring responsibilities and encountering a masculinised culture. The first research question also highlighted some unexpected findings in relation to resilience and optimism, such as appreciation of the institution's commitment to flexible working policies and teaching awards. Findings from the second research question revealed that although a range of motivations were at play prior to the women in the study applying for a senior teaching fellowship, for example to support an application for promotion and to articulate a deep commitment to teaching, prestige *was* embedded in the outcomes of

achieving their new teaching status. Finally, findings from the third research question revealed a complex and unexpected interplay of prestige, confidence and identity which are relevant to Bourdieusian concepts of career capital, and habitus.

Following on from this discussion chapter, Chapter 9 will provide a conclusion. It will summarise the outcomes of this study, outlining its original contribution to knowledge and its implications for policy and practice in HE. It will also reflect on some of the limitations of the study and present recommendations for future research.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter will firstly summarise the study and then highlight the key findings for each of the three research questions in turn. It will then explain the study's original contribution to knowledge and some limitations of the study. The chapter will then discuss implications and recommendations arising from the study, followed by recommendations for future research. The final section provides a conclusion to the chapter and to the thesis.

9.2 Summary of the study with the RQs

9.2.1 Research purpose and methodology

The study set out to examine the impact of senior teaching fellowships within the context of a gendered prestige economy, and in an institution where a high proportion of women achieve these awards. The study explores whether the HE sector's need to evidence a commitment to teaching excellence in an increasingly competitive, league-table driven market might be providing new opportunities for women teaching champions to gain some prestige for their achievements. The purpose of the study was to extend our understanding of the gender gap and professional recognition, to learn about the lesser-heard experiences of mid-career women who champion teaching and to inform institutional policy and practice during a time of complex and demanding challenges facing the sector. To the researcher's knowledge this is the first study that has explored the themes of gender, prestige and professional recognition together.

The research methodology was underpinned by feminist standpoint theory, aligned to an interpretivist epistemology and postmodern theory. As an insider researcher, I carried out case study research using visual and narrative methods incorporating career journey maps and narrative interviews with fifteen women participants. In addition to women on traditional academic T&R contracts, the participant group also included academics on teaching intensive contracts, Teaching Fellows and those who support teaching and learning in professional services roles, resulting in a set of richly contextualised accounts about

women's career experiences in HE. Data analysis adopted a thematic approach, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. A summary of the findings for each of the three research questions is laid out in the three following sections.

9.2.2 RQ1: What can we learn from the career journeys of mid-career women who champion teaching in higher education?

The study identified a lack of career planning by many of the women in the study, which is consistent with other research into women's careers and progression in HE (Coate et al., 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2010). The relevance of such a finding is that strategic career planning has been identified in previous studies as helpful and as an important factor in reducing the gender gap (Doherty & Manfredi, 2010). In general, the findings support previous research which suggests that women are more likely to experience "kaleidoscope", "frayed", or "patchwork careers" (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; Sabelis & Schilling, 2013), which can hinder their progression. The reasons behind the women in the study experiencing broken patterns of career progression are also consistent with those provided in the literature, for example many women are still grappling with the "double burden" (Cotterill et al., 2007) of balancing the competing demands of work and home life, particularly women with children.

A significant finding from the study is that, despite ongoing efforts by the institution to tackle the gender pay and leadership gap, a masculinised culture and a prestige economy appears to exist, which can disadvantage women and hinder their career progression, resulting in low career capital. A gendered division of teaching and research is part of this picture, resulting in both horizontal and vertical segregation for women. These findings support a substantial body of research from across the sector (for example, Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Doherty & Manfredi, 2006, 2010; Fitzgerald, 2014; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Morley, 2014; Savigny, 2014). Evidence was also found that institutional policy was not always aligned to actual practice, demonstrating that, although important, inclusive policies in themselves will not address an ingrained gender gap. Overall, these findings provide further evidence of how, despite good intentions, organisations are inherently gendered (see Acker, 1990) and how challenging it is to dismantle the 'gender asbestos' from within our workplaces (Wittenburg-Cox, 2013).

The literature can present a gloomy picture about the persistence of the gender gap and the impact of neoliberal management practices on the culture of HE. In contrast, the findings from this research were that many of the women practised a type of pragmatism in the way they navigated their careers, demonstrating both optimism and resilience in the face of challenges. For some of the women with caring responsibilities, there was sincere appreciation of the institution's family-friendly policies available to them, especially flexible working hours. Regarding some institutional initiatives to address the gender gap, the findings complemented previous studies, which highlights how relatively small interventions can make a positive difference to women in their careers. For example, participation in women only development programmes was found in the study to be helpful and impactful, supporting research by Debebe et al., (2016), DeFrank-Cole et al., (2014, 2016), Ely et al., (2011), Parker et al., (2018) and White (2003), whilst access to formal and informal mentoring and cross-disciplinary networking opportunities had proved inspirational and enhanced confidence, corroborating findings by Bynum (2015), de Vries (2011), de Vries et al., (2006), Diezmann and Grieshaber (2019), Doherty and Manfredi (2010) and Searby et al., (2015).

Also in relation to women's career journeys, the study provides helpful insights regarding the themes of identity, values and belonging, currently under-researched areas in relation to both gender and HE. For many of the women, identity was expressed through related themes such as values and a sense of belonging. Some of the women, as teaching focused staff in a research-intensive institution, had experienced feelings of isolation, non-belonging and low confidence, similar to those identified in other studies (Flecknoe, 2017; Skelton, 2012). These findings demonstrate the persistence of a hierarchical culture where research is valued over teaching and reiterate the importance of appropriately developing and rewarding teaching staff in HE (Cashmore et al., 2013; Fung & Gordon, 2014; Locke, 2014; Locke et al., 2016).

A key finding about values evidenced across the study was that being authentic, doing meaningful work and adding value, as well as making time for the demands of family life, was more important to the women than leadership ambitions and upwards career progression per se. This finding aligns with other research (Coate et al., 2015; Diezmann &

Grieshaber, 2019; Flemming & Nelson, 2007; O'Neil et al., 2013; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016) and highlights the complexity of women's lives, whose priorities are unlikely to remain fixed but will shift at different stages of their careers. Finally, previous research suggests there may be a link between awareness about one's authentic values and maintaining resilience and a sense of identity in the face of an increasingly audit-driven, managerial HE environment (Clegg, 2008; Harland & Pickering, 2011). This relationship was not explored in the study, but it is possible that the close connection to values expressed by the women in the study positively impacted the resilience and optimism that was evidenced in their narratives.

9.2.3 RQ2: What prestige, if any, do mid-career women associate with senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

Prestige was rarely referenced by the women in the study in an overt sense of "I applied for this award so that I could gain prestige"; however, awareness about prestige was embedded within their responses. This can be seen in the motivations provided for applying for senior teaching fellowships, which can be broadly summarised into three categories.

The first can be described as value-driven reasons relating to strengthening one's profile and sense of belonging and supporting professional development. There is a connection to gaining credibility or kudos within these motivations (see also Austen et al., (2018) and Rickinson et al., (2012)), which suggests an implicit link to prestige. The second motivation given by the women was to address a perceived *lack* of prestige associated with teaching, including the invisibility of teaching impact, and to achieve something tangible by gaining their award. Both motivations link directly back to the point presented in Section 9.2.2 about the disproportionate value placed on research over teaching in HE and the need to value and reward staff who teach in research-intensive institutions. The third reason given for applying relates quite directly to prestige, and neoliberalism. For some women, the senior nature of the award provided an opportunity to stand out from their colleagues and to strengthen a case for promotion: in other words, to gain prestige. Although there is no direct evidence that these awards have *real* value in league table terms, there is a perception that they might translate into evidence of teaching excellence at an open day or in a TEF submission.

The women here were aware that in this sense, they were "playing the game", which sat uncomfortably with them.

Following receipt of their award, awareness about prestige was apparent to the women at an individual, institutional and sector level. At an individual level, prestige was primarily realised through the strong sense of pride they gained by achieving their award, as well as through feelings of validation and an increased sense of belonging to the institution. The way the women expressed their sense of pride has clear parallels with the way prestige is referred to in the literature on the prestige economy, for example, as honour, kudos, respect and standing. In many cases, the award had led to new opportunities for the women, which had further increased their profile and added to their sense of prestige. Given that women appear to find it harder to gain prestige in a prestige economy, this is an important finding and one that is returned to in the summary for RQ3 in Section 9.2.4.

In terms of institutional signalling about prestige, the findings were generally more positive than previous studies. For example, studies have warned against teaching awards falling victim to neoliberal agendas, resulting in a "factory farm" approach by institutions which detracts from their value and meaning (Peat, 2015; Thornton, 2014; Warnes, 2020). However, the women in the study mostly did not echo these concerns, believing that the institution valued their awards, which in turn strengthened the women's perceptions of the prestige attached to them. For example, the institution's central funding of the process and celebration of the awards, including by senior management, was seen to signify prestige and value. A further concern expressed in the literature is that in some research-intensive institutions senior categories of teaching fellowships can in fact even be a "poisoned chalice" (Rickinson et al., 2012; Skelton, 2004) by signalling a commitment to teaching rather than research. Within the study, only one of the women echoed this viewpoint. In terms of sector level awareness of prestige, the study provided less evidence. However, two of the women saw a direct correlation between the announcement of their awards being published and external invitations they received immediately afterwards: one to give a conference keynote and one to supervise a PhD student.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that gaining senior categories of teaching fellowships can support women in academia to accrue some prestige, or at least to *feel* that they have. The link this may have with a corresponding increased sense of career capital is explored in the next section. Perceptions of prestige are inevitably shaped by the institutional response towards such awards; institutions need to demonstrate meaningful value to counteract any cynicism about the awards simply being a type of corporate marketing tool. In agreement with Spowart et al., (2016), the findings highlight the absolute importance of institutional buy-in to professional recognition and teaching fellowship schemes.

9.2.4 RQ3: How do mid-career women articulate the impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?

The study found several important positive and related impacts resulting from the women achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships. The first relates to identity and belonging, which is of interest because previous research has found that developing a sense of both as a teacher can be challenging in research-intensive institutions (Flecknoe et al., 2017; Skelton, 2012) and the study reflected some evidence of this challenge. Similar to findings by Cathcart et al., (2021) it appears that identity and belonging within the institution were enhanced by achieving a teaching award, for example through feeling valued for their achievements and through membership of communities of practice for award winners. For some women, these positive experiences proved to be 'healing', countering previous disappointments such as failed promotions, or not previously identifying with their own department or discipline group.

Secondly, and related to the finding about belonging and identity, analysis revealed that belonging to the communities of practice for award winners was found to be especially valued, which as well as providing networking opportunities, provided real connection and friendship with other colleagues, often women, who share a language about teaching quality. Reflecting Wenger's work on communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Wenger, 1998) these groups appear to be a force for good: strengthening identity, confidence and sense of belonging, especially for those in teaching roles in a research-intensive institution. The value placed on communities of practice is also in line with research which finds women may prioritise authenticity and

collegial relationships over leadership ambitions (Coate et al., 2015; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Flemming & Nelson, 2007; O'Neil et al., 2013; Vongalis-Macrow, 2016). A further possibility, although not articulated in the study, is that membership of the communities of practice may have alleviated a sense of exclusion from the academic boys' club (Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014).

One of the most significant findings resulting from this research is that a key impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships was an increased sense of pride and prestige for many of the women. Some felt this as an internal pride, an inner sense of esteem. For others it was realised through new opportunities, resulting in an increased institutional profile as an authority on teaching and further doors opening as a result; it was also felt through the value the institution appeared to place on the fellowships. For some women, achieving a senior category of teaching fellowship felt "transformational" as was also found by Rolfe (2018) and Quinsee and Jones-Devitt (2018). Many of the women gave examples of the opportunities which appeared to follow their award, for example: achieving a promotion, being invited onto committees or working groups about teaching and learning policy, connecting with like-minded colleagues in a community of practice, or applying for new roles. Previous research has linked a lack of prestige for women to the gender gap in HE and to the existence of a masculinised, prestige economy, which makes these findings important (Coate et al., 2015; Coate & Kandiko Howson, 2016; Kandiko Howson et al., 2018; Morley 2014).

A further significant finding is that the combined benefits of achieving a prestigious award summarised above – of feeling an enhanced sense of identity and belonging within the institution, and new opportunities being offered - resulted in increased confidence for many of the women. This overlaps with findings by Cathcart et al., (2021) about an increased sense of self-efficacy resulting from Fellowships. In the study, these outcomes were true for those who already felt confident and for those who experienced low confidence and even feelings of imposter syndrome. The findings from the study about confidence, identity and belonging appear to be relevant to Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1984, 1988). Many of the women felt in a better place, felt stronger and felt more fortunate than before they had gained their award, indicating a positive shift in habitus. Given that many women suffer from low

confidence in a masculinised, competitive HE culture (Blalock, 2014; Diezmann & Grieshaber, 2019; Hutchins, 2015; Parkman, 2016), and a body of research indicates confidence and self-belief are much needed attributes for women in countering the gender gap (for example, Blalock, 2014; Ely et al., 2011; Kets de Fries, 2005; Young, 2011) these findings are highly relevant.

In addition to drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, a link can be made from the study's findings to Bourdieu's broader concept of capitals. The way some of the women described the success which followed their teaching award ("a cascade", "success […] self-creates", "it snowballed") appears to exactly match the way the prestige economy works, with the accrual of prestige resulting in more prestige. In turn, this process mirrors the way in which Bourdieusian capitals operate, whereby gaining social, cultural, economic and/or academic capital becomes a benefit which can be traded for more capital, and thus more success. Meanwhile, it is suggested that all of the beneficial elements summarised here – increased prestige, identity, confidence, social connections – are also a part of career capital, incorporating a range of interconnected capitals. A tentative conclusion from this study, therefore, is that many of the women appeared to gain career capital as an outcome of achieving a senior teaching fellowship. In the same way as the study's findings about enhanced prestige and confidence are important, because women may lack these attributes, the findings about career capital are also significant (Fitzsimmons & Callan, 2014, 2016; Jayashee, 2020).

Finally, it should be highlighted that the positive outcomes noted in this section were not confined to the women. The institution benefited from these effects too, in terms of increased loyalty and appreciation, a sense of belonging to the institution, a strong commitment to 'give back' and progression to more senior leadership roles. More broadly, the results of the study suggest that it is possible for institutions to counter concerns about teaching fellowships being tokenistic and that award schemes *can* tread a fine balance between supporting neoliberally driven institutional targets for professional recognition *and* providing an experience that is meaningful and impactful for individuals. As Cathcart et al., (2021, p.12) identify, our focus needs to move beyond the award itself, to "its enduring impact on practice".

9.3 Original contribution to knowledge

There are seven original contributions to knowledge made by this study, all of which have helped to shape the recommendations for policy and practice presented in Section 9.5 of this chapter. The original contributions to knowledge are as follows:

i. A key contribution to original knowledge made by this study is its treatment of the prestige economy. The prestige economy has previously been used in research to explain a culture of academic motivation in HE, highlighting that research-related achievements carry academic capital which can be accrued as a type of currency in career progression terms. It has also been explored through a gendered lens to better understand the gender gap in HE and the career journeys of women academics, revealing that prestige can be harder for women to accrue. This thesis extends that research by exploring the prestige economy in relation to the career experiences of mid-career women in HE who have achieved senior categories of professional recognition for their work in teaching and supporting learning. In doing so, the study builds upon previous understandings about the prestige economy in HE, particularly regarding the gendered career journeys of women who champion teaching.

ii. Career capital is currently an under-researched area in relation to gender in HE; this study is original in its consideration of career capital in relation to the gender gap, the prestige economy and senior categories of teaching awards, especially in identifying factors which might help women in HE to build career capital.

iii. This research attempts to enhance our understanding about the gender gap and the career journeys of mid-career women in HE. Much existing research into the gender gap in HE is focused on women in senior leadership roles or women aspiring to leadership positions, with some attention also paid to women who are early career researchers. Less attention has been paid to mid-career women in HE, and yet it is said to be the longest and least supported phase for women in academia and it is from this pool that any future women leaders will be drawn. This research therefore adds important understanding about the lesser-heard career experiences and

challenges faced by mid-career women in a sector which is wrestling with an entrenched gender pay and leadership gap.

iv.   As well as focusing on leadership, many of the existing studies about the gender gap in HE focuses on women who are in academic roles. This study extends the sphere of focus about the gender gap to also include those on teaching-intensive contracts, to include Teaching Fellows and those in professional service roles who support teaching and learning. This broader focus is appropriate given the fragmentation of traditional academic careers in HE and the increase in teaching-only contracts and professional services roles related to teaching.

v.   The literature on HEA Fellowships is relatively new and is thus an emerging body of research to which this study contributes. Much of the research so far has focused on evaluating the impact of HEA Fellowship schemes, with an emphasis on the category of HEA Fellowship itself, given that this category is the sector expectation for lecturers. In relation to this literature, the themes of gender and prestige are under-researched and to the researcher's knowledge, prior to this study there has been no specific focus on these themes in relation to senior categories of HEA Fellowships, Senior and Principal Fellowship. This study therefore attempts to bring new understanding to the developing literature about HEA Fellowships.

vi.   The established literature on National Teaching Fellowships incorporates a range of themes, evaluating the impact of NTF Schemes on the individual, the institution, and the sector. In a few studies, there has been brief attention paid to gender and to prestige, but not as a dedicated area of focus. Therefore, this study is believed by the researcher to be one of the first attempts to explore the themes of gender and prestige in relation to the NTFS as a main area of focus, adding important new understanding to the field.

vii.   Institutionally owned University Teaching Fellowship schemes remain under-researched. Yet, in the institution where the study took place, there is a close connection between these and senior categories of professional recognition at a national level, for example, in the prestige attached to them, and in providing a pathway to NTF. This study is therefore novel, but appropriate, in its inclusion of University Teaching Fellowships within this research about senior categories of Teaching Fellowships.

viii. Methodologically, this study was inspired by, and is an extension of, a study by Kandiko Howson et al., (2018) which drew on the conceptual maps drawn by mid-career women in HE to explore the career journeys of women academics and the prestige economy. This study expands that approach to include past, present and future career elements as well as positive and negative aspects. The approach of combining visual and narrative methods was chosen so that the women participating in the study had some ownership of their stories in line with feminist research approaches, in particular standpoint theory, to ensure their voice remained at the forefront of the data throughout the process. Additionally, the innovative use of the career journey maps strengthened the outcomes of the narrative interviews by providing helpful prompts, and enriched the data collected overall.

9.4 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study are presented below:

i. There are limitations regarding scope and sampling in terms of being able to generalise the results of this study. Firstly, it was a small-scale qualitative study limited to fifteen women participants who champion teaching from across the institution. Many of the women provided positive responses about the impact of achieving their new teaching status; it is possible that they took part in the study because of this, it is also possible that others with a less positive story declined. It is not suggested that the findings represent the experiences of all women who support teaching within the institution.

ii. Regarding scope and sampling, the study took place at one research-intensive HE institution in England; the findings may be different in less research intensive HE institutions, either in the UK or internationally.

iii. The study aims to provide tentative suggestions about senior categories of fellowships overall, rather than to make generalisations about specific categories of fellowships. This is partly because the sample group was not perfectly balanced across the four senior categories of fellowships; the majority held SFHEA and UTF status with fewer PFHEA and NTFs taking part, which reflects the balance of real

numbers within the institution and across the sector. It is also because, although the different categories of senior fellowships share some characteristics, they are also distinct from each other, for example the application process to become UTF and NTF is competitive, whilst the process for SFHEA and PFHEA is criterion based. The small-scale nature of this study did not allow for distinguishing between them; it also afforded the research participants an additional layer of anonymity by not doing so.

iv. The HE context, and institutional policy and practice, is constantly shifting. Even during the time of carrying out this study, some of the contextual factors have changed, for example contractual conditions for Teaching Fellows have improved within the institution studied. The Covid-19 global pandemic, which has had such widespread impact, arrived after data for the study were gathered, which means its effect is absent from participant responses. The findings from this small-scale study are therefore time bound and should be considered within the context presented.

v. Chapter 3 on Methods provides a clear rationale for all decisions made about the research design. Choosing to do insider research and to also include visual data was a rewarding experience and provided rich data, but at times it was also a constraint, for example, there are details that have been omitted to protect participant anonymity.

9.5   Implications and recommendations for policy and practice

As highlighted in Section 9.4 about the limitations of this study, there is limited scope for generalising the findings from a small sample size within one research intensive institution to the wider sector. The following implications and recommendations for policy and practice are thus most relevant to the institution where the study took place. However, to the researcher's knowledge this is the first study to research the relationship between gender, prestige and senior categories of teaching fellowships. It is therefore hoped that the implications from this study will also be of interest to other institutions in HE.

The implications and recommendations for policy and practice arising from this study are as follows:

i. Policy makers in senior management and Human Resources teams should reflect on the nuanced picture that this study and other research highlights in relation to

women's careers. For example, that women's career paths are complex and fluid, are more likely to incorporate career breaks, and women appear to value and measure their success in more varied ways than via hierarchical career progression alone.

ii. The women in the study expressed real appreciation for inclusive and flexible working policy. However, results also suggest that inclusive policy designed by the institution is not always matched to practice out in Schools and on promotion panels, even following a revision of the promotions process. This suggests that further work is required by the institution, for example in terms of tackling an entrenched masculine culture and condescending behaviour displayed towards those who teach.

iii. Findings from the study suggest that career planning provision for those on less traditional career paths in the institution, such as teaching intensive lecturers or those in professional services roles, is not well-established within the institution. This contrasts with the support provided by the institution for early career researchers. There is therefore scope for the people development team within Human Resources to provide opportunities, and *sooner*, to support early career women in a wider range of roles to strategically plan and set goals for themselves.

iv. Policies which incorporate flexible working hours and career breaks are helpful but may not align well with a culture which rewards high volume of research outputs and demands long working hours.

v. Results from the study clearly indicate that institutional investment in women only development programmes such as Springboard and Aurora is helpful and impactful and should be continued.

vi. Based on the positive and impactful experiences noted by women in the study, it is recommended that the institution considers ways to create further opportunities for cross-institutional mentoring and networking for women.

vii. The findings about the positive benefits of communities of practice should be of interest to policy makers, academic developers and people development teams in HE who may be finding it challenging to engage and support staff in the current highly pressured climate.

viii. This study highlights the absolute importance, within research intensive institutions, of providing alternative and inclusive routes for reward and recognition for staff

(often women) who champion teaching quality but are not following a traditional academic pathway on T&R contracts.

ix.   Neoliberal agendas are ever-present; a careful balance is required in the way the institutions treat and value senior categories of teaching fellowships so that the integrity and meaningfulness of fellowship schemes is protected. It is strongly recommended that the institution continues its funding and support for such schemes, including to publicly signal their value 'from the top', which helps attribute meaning and prestige to the awards.

x.   Findings from this study about senior categories of teaching fellowships and the role of prestige, including the way it can positively impact confidence, habitus and career capital should be of interest to policy makers and people development teams in HR where the study took place and to other institutions in the sector which are searching for ways to build the leadership pipeline.

xi.   The institution, and sector, is still trying to narrow the gap between teaching and research. Despite the positive vision set out in the 2003 White Paper, The Future of Higher Education, and despite many funded initiatives over the past two decades, including the development of professional recognition schemes, teaching is still fighting for its place as a respected career path in research-intensive institutions.

9.6   Recommendations for future research

The following opportunities for future research which might usefully build on this current study and further extend our understanding of prestige in relation to the gender gap in HE, and of senior categories of professional recognition for teaching, are suggested:

i.   This study drew on a sample size of fifteen women who champion teaching in HE from just one research-intensive institution in England and we therefore cannot be certain to what extent contextual factors were at play. There is rich potential in terms of extending this study, for example, to include both genders in a future study and to extend the sample size from beyond one institution to include participants from a range of research and teaching intensive institutions across the sector, and even internationally.

ii. The current study has investigated four senior categories of teaching fellowship without distinguishing between them; however, each of them warrant examination on their own terms. It would therefore be beneficial to extend this study to consider each of the four senior categories of fellowship separately in relation to gender and prestige.

iii. The participants in this study were, broadly speaking, in the mid-career stage, meaning they were not at the start of their careers, yet they had not yet reached the peak of their achievements. One of the research participants perceived a difference between her younger and older female colleagues in terms of ambition and confidence levels, a point which is also suggested by Morley (2013). It was beyond the scope of this study to distinguish between participants' responses according to their age; however, it would be interesting to extend the literature on this topic in relation to the gender gap.

iv. As highlighted in the introduction and literature review chapters of this thesis, ethnic minority women academics are hardest hit by the gender pay gap and leadership gap. This was not a focus of the study and would be challenging in a study relying on insider research where specific identities need to be even more closely protected. A study which pays particular attention to the experiences of ethnic minority women in HE in relation to the themes within this study is recommended.

v. It was highlighted in the discussion chapter that values are an under-researched area in higher education. Given that the women in the study expressed the importance of aligning professional practice with their values, it is suggested that further research into the role and importance of values in women's careers may shed some helpful light on its potential impact on identity, motivation and resilience.

vi. Teacher identity was also highlighted in the discussion chapter as an under-researched area. Exploring teacher identity in relation to gender, communities of practice and career capital may enhance our understanding about ways to address the gender gap.

vii. It was striking, when reviewing the literature for this thesis, how little research exists about gender and career capital in general, and a recommendation from this study is that this is a worthwhile area for future research.

viii. Finally, the findings suggest that a slight but positive shift in prestige associated with teaching may be occurring within the institution where the study took place. An interesting area for future research may be to explore whether this is also apparent at sector level, and what the implications might be for the gender gap, given that women in HE are more likely than their male colleagues to hold teaching-focused roles.

9.7 Final words

The purpose of this study about the gender gap in HE was to explore whether the new spotlight on teaching quality in the sector, and senior categories of teaching fellowships, were creating opportunities for women, who are often in teaching focused roles, to gain prestige in the prestige economy. Inspired by research which suggests that women find it harder to access prestige in a gendered prestige economy in HE, this study has made an original contribution to knowledge by researching the relationship between senior categories of teaching fellowships and prestige in the context of the gender gap. A key finding is that women might indeed gain prestige and, more broadly, increase their career capital by achieving a senior category of teaching fellowship. In keeping with feminist research approaches, the study adopted a contextual approach by also examining women's career journeys more broadly. As has been highlighted, the issues are nuanced and cannot easily be summarised. Instead, this thesis attempts to shed light on some of the complexity of women's lived career experiences by allowing them to share their own individual narratives. It is hoped that the findings in this study about career journeys and the role of prestige will inform policy and practice in HE and, most importantly, might inch us closer to understanding and addressing a woefully persistent gender gap.

Tessa, reflecting on her career journey:

> *I suppose what I love about my career is [...] it has been a little bit accidental and a little bit random, and the reason for that is because I've always tried to do the things that make me happy and, and I think that's an equally valid way to, to live your life I suppose [...] I guess I'm the sort of parent that says to my kids... you need to follow your dreams and you don't need to have it all mapped out for you because then*

you're open to the possibility that you can go and do other things, um, and it <u>may</u> mean you're a little bit less successful, I mean, you know if I look at XXXX's house and I look at my house, you can tell who's more successful, but, but that doesn't mean that I haven't had any less of an amazing career.

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Appendix A Ethics approval, Information and Consent Form

University of Reading

Tick one:

Staff project: _____ PhD _____ EdD ✓_____

Name of applicant (s): Clare McCullagh

Title of project: (Working title)
"Achieving reward and recognition for T&L alongside notions of academic prestige for women in HE"

Name of supervisor (for student projects): Dr Karen Jones (2nd supervisor Dr Catherine Foley)

Please complete the form below including relevant sections overleaf.

	YES	NO	
Have you prepared an Information Sheet for participants and/or their parents/carers that:	✓		
a) explains the purpose(s) of the project	✓		
b) explains how they have been selected as potential participants	✓		
c) gives a full, fair and clear account of what will be asked of them and how the information that they provide will be used	✓		
d) makes clear that participation in the project is voluntary	✓		
e) explains the arrangements to allow participants to withdraw at any stage if they wish	✓		
f) explains the arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of any material collected during the project, including secure arrangements for its storage, retention and disposal	✓		
g) explains the arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent for this	✓		
h) explains the arrangements for providing participants with the research results if they wish to have them	✓		
i) gives the name and designation of the member of staff with responsibility for the project together with contact details, including email . If any of the project investigators are students at the IoE, then this information must be included and their name provided	✓		
k) explains, where applicable, the arrangements for expenses and other payments to be made to the participants	N/A		
j) includes a standard statement indicating the process of ethical review at the University undergone by the project, as follows: 'This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct'.	✓		
k) includes a standard statement regarding insurance: "The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request".	✓		
Please answer the following questions			
1) Will you provide participants involved in your research with all the information necessary to ensure that they are fully informed and not in any way deceived or misled as to the purpose(s) and nature of the research? (Please use the subheadings used in the example information sheets on blackboard to ensure this).	✓		
2) Will you seek written or other formal consent from all participants, if they are able to provide it, in addition to (1)?	✓		
3) Is there any risk that participants may experience physical or psychological distress in taking part in your research?		✓	
4) Staff Only - have you taken the online training modules in data protection and information security (which can be found here: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.aspx Please note: students complete a Data Protection Declaration form and submit it with this application to the ethics committee.	✓		
5) Have you read the Health and Safety booklet (available on Blackboard) and completed a Risk Assessment Form to be included with this ethics application?	✓		
6) Does your research comply with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research?	✓		

	YES	NO	N.A.
7) If your research is taking place in a school, have you prepared an information sheet and consent form to gain the permission in writing of the head teacher or other relevant supervisory professional?			✓

	Yes	No	N/A
8) Has the data collector obtained satisfactory DBS clearance?			✓
9) If your research involves working with children under the age of 16 (or those whose special educational needs mean they are unable to give informed consent), have you prepared an information sheet and consent form for parents/carers to seek permission in writing, or to give parents/carers the opportunity to decline consent?			✓
10) If your research involves processing sensitive personal data[1], or if it involves audio/video recordings, have you obtained the explicit consent of participants/parents?	✓		
11) If you are using a data processor to subcontract any part of your research, have you got a written contract with that contractor which (a) specifies that the contractor is required to act only on your instructions, and (b) provides for appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect the data?			✓
12a) Does your research involve data collection outside the UK?			✓
12b) If the answer to question 12a is "yes", does your research comply with the legal and ethical requirements for doing research in that country?			✓
13a) Does your research involve collecting data in a language other than English?		✓	
13b) If the answer to question 13a is "yes", please confirm that information sheets, consent forms, and research instruments, where appropriate, have been directly translated from the English versions submitted with this application.			✓
14a. Does the proposed research involve children under the age of 5?		✓	
14b. If the answer to question 14a is "yes": My Head of School (or authorised Head of Department) has given details of the proposed research to the University's insurance officer, and the research will not proceed until I have confirmation that insurance cover is in place.			✓
If you have answered YES to Question 3, please complete Section B below			

- Complete **either** Section A **or** Section B below with details of your research project.
- Complete a risk assessment.
- Sign the form in Section C.
- Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, tests, questionnaires, interview schedules, evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g. screen shot/copy of certificate).
- Email the completed form to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.

Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.

A: My research goes beyond the 'accepted custom and practice of teaching' but I consider that this project has **no** significant ethical implications. (Please tick the box.)	✓

Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils etc.

Approximately 20 interviewees amongst female academic and professional support staff working within my institution who are at the mid-stage of their careers in HE.

Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words noting:

1. title of project
2. purpose of project and its academic rationale
3. brief description of methods and measurements
4. participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria
5. consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary)
6. a clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them.
7. estimated start date and duration of project

The working title for the research is *"Achieving reward and recognition for T&L alongside notions of academic prestige for women in HE".* The study is set within a research-intensive university in the UK and will explore ways in which reward and professional recognition in teaching and learning might impact upon the career aspirations and career progression for women who are in the mid-career stage as academics and professional support staff. The backdrop to the study is the gender gap in HE, for example, in leadership and salary terms.

The study explores whether reward and recognition in T&L, for example UTF (University Teaching Fellowship) or SFHEA (Senior Fellowship), might be a type of academic prestige within a gendered prestige economy and whether and/or how this impacts upon women in terms of career progression. It builds on existing research which attempts to understand and address the gender gap in HE but shifts the focus from women leaders in HE to women in the mid-career stage.

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[1] Sensitive personal data consists of information relating to the racial or ethnic origin of a data subject, their political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, sexual life, physical or mental health or condition, or criminal offences or record.

Findings from the interview will be compared to the literature for points of similarity, resonance and difference. Conclusions will be of interest and relevance not only within the institution being studied, but within the wider HE sector as well as working environments beyond HE. Interested groups will include: senior leadership teams, inclusivity and diversity deans and directors, Advance HE, SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association), CPD scheme and professional recognition teams, academic developers, women academics and professional support staff, feminist researchers, HR partners and career women in general.

Drawing on standpoint theory and institutional ethnography the research will take a narrative inquiry approach which is qualitative and interpretive. Data will be collected using visual methods and narrative interviews. Prior to the interviews, participants will be invited to sketch a career journey map which will act as a prompt for discussion and reflection during the interview. Two examples will be provided to help clarify what is meant by the career map. Audio data will be captured using a digital audio voice recorder and transcribed for analysis.

Research participants will be mid-career academics and professional support staff who have achieved Senior or Principal Fellowship or who have achieved UTF or NTF. They will be identified via the institutional FLAIR CPD Scheme and via the UTF and NTF Communities of Practice (this is openly accessible information) and invited by email to participate. The age range for the majority of participants is likely to be between 30-60 years but there are no age parameters. Interview dates will be arranged at mutually convenient times, arranged by email. Consent and participant information arrangements will be provided electronically and in hard copy form, with signatures confirming consent obtained. These will include arrangements should participants wish to withdraw, arrangements for debriefing (please see attached forms), and examples of the career journey maps for clarification.

In terms of ethical considerations, I am conducting insider research, and in that sense the research participants are also my colleagues, so I am very aware that my relationship with participants, and their career stories, continue beyond this research study. I will conduct myself professionally at all times when in contact with my interview participants, I will ask appropriate questions and I will handle responses, which may be of a personal nature, sensitively and confidentially. There may be details they do not wish to divulge, and I will reassure them that this is perfectly acceptable. I will ensure I anonymise all data and reassure participants that confidentiality is an absolute priority.

Data collection will commence as soon as ethical approval is granted, starting with a small pilot. Approximate timings are as follows:
July-Aug 2019 - small pilot study (as soon as ethical clearance has been obtained)
Sept-Nov 2019 – full data collection and transcription (overlapping)
Dec-Feb 2020 – transcription and analysis (overlapping)
Feb-April 2020 – writing up findings
May-Aug – return to literature review and other chapters
Sept-Dec – final write up before submission

RISK ASSESSMENT: Please complete the form below

Brief outline of Work/activity:	One-to-one narrative interviews will take place in university meeting rooms. The only equipment used will be two hand-held battery-powered audio recorders (one as back up), paper, pens/pencils.	
Where will data be collected?	University meeting rooms/classrooms (will be arranged via room bookings).	
Significant hazards:	None identified. The university itself has a duty to maintain a safe area of work within the university campus. During the audio recording there will be no trailing leads because the audio recorders are both hand-held battery-powered devices.	
Who might be exposed to hazards?	N/A	
Existing control measures:	The rooms fall within the university's Health and Safety responsibilities.	
Are risks adequately controlled:	Yes	
If NO, list additional	Additional controls	Action by:

controls and actions required:		

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: ...   Print Name.... Clare McCullagh...   Date...24ᵗʰ May 2019..........

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project has been considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed: ....   Print Name...Prof. Jill Porter.........   Date 28ᵗʰ May 2019.
(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative)*

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher:	**Supervisor**:
Name: *Clare McCullagh*	Name: *Dr Karen Jones*
Phone: xxxx	Phone: xxxx
Email: clare.mccullagh@pgr.reading.ac.uk	Email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

Dear xxxx

As part of the data collection stage of my EdD thesis, I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about women and careers in HE, with a particular focus on career progression and reward and recognition in teaching and learning.

What is the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore ways in which reward and recognition in teaching and learning (for example, UTF and SFHEA) might impact upon career experiences and progression for women academics and professional support staff in HE. The backdrop to the study is the gender gap in HE and notions of academic prestige. I hope the research will increase understanding about career experiences, aspirations and motivation for women in HE which might enable us to improve upon existing support, policy and opportunities available to women.

Why have you been chosen to take part?

You have been chosen to take part as a woman working at the University of Reading in an academic or professional services role who has achieved either UTF and/or NTF status and/or been awarded Senior Fellowship. Approximately 20 participants are being invited to take part.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you take part. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting me, the researcher, Clare McCullagh, Tel: x4482, email: clare.mccullagh@pgr.reading.ac.uk.

What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to sketch a 'map' of your career journey to capture key events and influences. I will provide you with more detail instructions for this activity with a template and an example career map, but there are no right or wrong ways to approach it.

Following this, I will invite you to take part in an interview at a time that suits you, to ask about your career experiences, motivations and aspirations, including your reflections as a woman working in HE. Rather than referring to a set list of interview questions I'd like to use the career journey map as a prompt for more detailed discussion and to rely on a narrative interview approach to allow you to elaborate on points made. The interview will be recorded and transcribed with your permission and the information gathered will be used by me for data analysis.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

I am both a student and a member of staff at the University, and as an 'inside researcher' I am acutely aware of the need for confidentiality, sensitivity and care towards my research participants.

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by me as researcher. You will

be assigned a pseudonym to distinguish your responses from other participants and key identifying details, such as job title or School, will be removed. No identifying details linking you to the research will be included in any research outputs, including the final thesis or any resulting publications.

I very much hope that participants will find it an interesting and helpful exercise to reflect on the issues raised by taking part in this research.

What will happen to the data?
Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in the thesis or any resulting publications. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by that pseudonym in all records. The records of this study will be kept private. Recordings and transcript files will be stored on a personal but university owned (N) drive on a password-protected computer, which means that only I, as researcher, will be able to access these files and confidentiality is maintained. Paper based research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet which only I will have access to. In line with the University's policy on the management of research data, anonymised data gathered in this research may be preserved and made publicly available for others to consult and re-use.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will discard the data.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact my Supervisor Dr Karen Jones,

University of Reading; Tel: 0118 378 2603, email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?
If you would like more information, or you have any further questions, please contact me, the researcher, on email clare.mccullagh@pgr.reading.ac.uk or call me on x4482.

I do hope that you will agree to participate in the study. If you do, please complete the attached consent form with an electronic signature and return it to me by email.

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

Signed:

Date: 10th September 2019

Researcher:
Name: *Clare McCullagh*
Phone: 0118 378 4482
Email: clare.mccullagh@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisor:
Name: *Dr Karen Jones*
Phone: 0118 378 2603
Email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

EdD working research title:

"Achieving reward and recognition for T&L alongside notions of academic prestige for women in HE"

Consent Form

Please use tick box after each statement to confirm it has been read and agreed to.

1. I have read and had explained to me by Clare McCullagh the accompanying Information Sheet relating to the EdD project exploring women's career progression, reward and recognition in HE. ☐

2. I have had explained to me the purposes of the project and what will be required of me, and any questions I have had have been answered to my satisfaction. ☐

3. I agree to the arrangements described in the Information Sheet in so far as they relate to my participation. ☐

4. I have had explained to me what information will be collected about me, what it will be used for, who it may be shared with, how it will be kept safe, and my rights in relation to my data. ☐

5. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the project any time, and that this will be without detriment. ☐

6. I agree to this interview being recorded. ☐

7. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in subsequent publications. ☐

8. I understand that the data collected from me in this study will be preserved, and subject to safeguards will be made available to other authenticated researchers. ☐*

   (*Guidance note only: safeguards will include pseudonymisation, data minimisation, secure transfers, and any necessary data sharing and confidentiality agreements between parties)

9. This project has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee and National Research Ethics committee where relevant and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

10. I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the accompanying Information Sheet. ☐

Name: ....

Date of birth: ....

Signed: ....

Date: ....

I am happy to be included on a register of research participants for the purposes of being contacted about further studies by Clare McCullagh.   Please tick   ☐ (optional)

Appendix B Guidance for creating career journey map

University of Reading

Researcher:
Name: *Clare McCullagh*
Phone: 0118 378 4482
Email: clare.mccullagh@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisor:
Name: *Dr Karen Jones*
Phone: 0118 378 2603
Email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

EdD Research: Creating a career journey map

Introduction

As outlined in the Information Sheet about this research study, I'm asking each of my participants to complete a 'career journey map' prior to the interview, both as an additional data source and to help inform the interview itself.

This is a reflective task which might take about 20 minutes. As well as being extremely useful for me, I hope it will also prove to be a reflective exercise for you. I'm calling this a map, but a map/timeline/ mind map are all options, it's up to you. I imagine it will be easier to create this by hand with pen and paper, but if you prefer, a digital version is of course also fine.

Before the interview, I will email you a reminder to complete this task, so I can receive the map ahead of our discussions.

How to complete the career journey map

Please create an outline of your career journey, with three elements:
- key aspects of your career journey to date – "the past"
- where/how you see yourself now – "the present"
- where you'd like to be, for example, in 5 or 10 years – "the future"

A few points to guide you…

- Your 'map' may not look like a typical map when you're finished, because there's no right or wrong way of approaching this task. So, you may find your map takes the form of a timeline, a diagram, a mind map, a sketch, a tangle of words and arrows, or all of these, and you may also wish to draw on metaphor to help you capture certain aspects.
- The three elements past/present/future need not take up equal amounts of space in your map.
- You do not need to include too much detail. Aim to capture some noteworthy aspects, for example a significant mentor, a key qualification, promotion, professional recognition or award, key life event or personal experience. Two different examples are attached.
- Include factors/experiences which have either helped or hindered your progress.

Sending the career journey map to me

Once you have finished the map, I can collect it in person if you drop me an email, or you can email it to me as a scanned PDF.
Many thanks
Clare McCullagh x4482
clare.mccullagh@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Appendix C Interview prompt sheet

Background experiences: the past

1. Career aspirations when you started working in HE… and changes since…
2. "Your map highlights that […] was a key turning point for you…"
3. "Your map highlights that [*person*] was a key influence…"
4. "In what ways have your goals shifted, since you*…"* [*reasons why*]

Achieving professional recognition and teaching awards: the past

1. Motivations to apply for [*UTF/NTF/SFHEA/PFHEA*]…
2. "Your map highlights achieving [*UTF/NTF/SFHEA/PFHEA*] as a positive…"
3. Pick up on any allusions to prestige and invite elaboration

Where they are now: present

1. "Your map highlights that [*you currently feel*…] about […]"
2. Perceptions about working in HE as a woman… examples of impact
3. "What aspects do you value most about […]"

Looking forwards: the future

1. "Your map highlights that in the future you'd like to be…"
2. Enablers and challenges in reaching those goals…
3. Changes to values and motivations over time/in future…

Appendix D Transcription codes and extracts from transcripts

Symbol	Description
XXXX	Anonymised text
[words in square brackets]	Additional explanation provided, for example a context provided for text which has been anonymised, or if a speaker becomes emotional
…. (3-4 dots)	Speaker pausing
- (hypen)	Indicates a cut off or interruption including the speaker interrupting themselves, for example to add additional information
Underline	A raise in volume or emphasis
[laugh] or [both laugh]	The speaker(s) laughing
[…]	Indicates text removed from a section of speech to only include relevant content

Extract from Donna's interview transcript

Yeah I think that I was frustrated with the um, so my first time ever applying for personal titles wasn't successful based on not enough research output, um…

That was the feedback?

Oh, the feedback was contradictory but that's not important to you, what you do, um soooo there was... yeah there was a bit of, a bit of frustration because having had times in my early career when with professional per - and there were a few of us who were the same generation who were doing various teaching and stuff and there were things where the guys were getting paid more, probably because they were better at negotiating cos they'd been taught how to do that and then sort of moving into XXXX and...

And that was in academia?

So that was in academia so there was this disparity in how people were paid and I remember one of my senior colleagues going y- y- like... be careful... be aware of some of the dynamics, so being aware of the gender dynamics in my early career, going 'ok' XXXX …talked me, talked me into um, 'oh no, well you're changing so you can't possibly whatever' and then changing XXXX and not being able to negotiate over salaries and stuff and then finding out that someone had been appointed at exactly the time I was and was actually being paid <u>more</u> and I was like 'well that's bullshit' and then being very aware of having to... being a

PhD student and that actually there were different rates but no… but everybody went 'oh, you're a PhD student' not actually you've got previous teaching experience and professional experience and actually we should pay you the other rate because we pay other people that you know

Yeah, yeah, yeah

So and then the sort of … at the time I was applying for a permanent job in… there was an Associate Professor thing and people were 'oh no, no, no you couldn't possibly go for that' and then someone who – the person who got appointed wasn't that different, and seeing appointment panels where you just see how men -

And was that a male colleague [who got appointed AP]?

Yes…Um being on recruitment panels within university and seeing how things were… some of these people are younger than me or whatever and this is not… so in the sense of… having had that back foot from the initial career, initial first job because there was gender bias and

Mmmn

it was [date] in XXXX, which wasn't going to go away, and how different sectors of the XXXX value things but then it got perpetuated and moving between XXXX and XXXX exacerbated the problems and doing the PhD and XXXX, that isn't really a XXXX, XXXX and stuff all just exacerbated that problem so some of me has always been really angry and the job I got in XXXX was a much better job and I turned that job down to apply for the job at [here] assuming that the department, that they were gonna match it and they didn't… so I was right from the start of my post really angry with [our institution]

Even though you'd been a student here?

Yeah and frustrated when, when they were like 'well ok we're going to appoint you at the same thing' and I thought 'wait a minute I've been working at this level for like the last so many years'… and going that's, I just laughed, 'that's ridiculous' and they were 'oh well we didn't actually discuss your salary' and I'm like that's…

Mmmn

I don't know so I, I think some of the, the personal titles was cos I was really angry and then I delayed applying longer than I wanted to, cos, so it's just like a lifelong chip on your shoulder cos you realise in your early career it's unfair and you can never make up for that gap… And lots of things have happened to exacerbate that gap for me so it's frustrating

I know yeah, it's not uncommon and just the thing alone of not, not being good at negotiating

Yeah… Sometimes I have those thoughts but then… they go 'oh maybe that's not unfair', but at no point does someone go 'that doesn't look quite right', yeah they're always willing to kind of take the piss and take advantage so I've, part of the... I was just fed up with all of that, so you do, some of this is setting goals for yourself, so maybe it is prestige economy cos you're going well, I need to set my own goals…

Yeah, yeah… <u>but</u> you have… you have done well, and you have, you know looking from the outside…

Thank you and I think, I think that's partly why I wanted to do the [award] thing, was this opportunity to be a part of the community of practice and share… And that was less about the recog – [award] to me wasn't about the recognition it was the, the training opportunity to be involved in discussions about strategy and policy… And, and work with things and get more insight into the wider university and, all that kind of stuff so you, like, [previous award] was the 'I've got these projects, I should do this', this is a good thing for me

Like, let's bank this

Yeah, [new award] wasn't about the, the accolade, that was about I want to be part of the community of practice and have these conversations and develop this network and, and be in a position to take my practice beyond the university… So that the, the having some funding - because the departments won't fund pedagogy and having the money from the [award] to go to the XXXX [discipline] conferences here and things like that

Yeah

Gives you a - well the university is now supporting my pedagogic development… And the School is not going to support that… But if I have the [award] then I can do that

Yes, yeah

So it's more about an enabling activity… Rather than the status

That's really interesting I mean quite a few people have said to me, um, in different ways they've, they've come up with this, this discussion about community of practice

Yeah

It's not what I was looking at... I focused so much on the prestige economy… But actually, it's about, a lot of people are talking about making connections and networking, and…

Yeah and I think it's, there's... when you're doing... when I suppose you're doing stuff that might be innovative, whether it's good or bad or successful or not, cos you know, there's lots of things that I've done that have gone quite badly or… Or have been done with, with good intentions but had things oh actually that didn't work and now maybe not do it

Yeah

So, there's part of the value of the communities of practice is being able to contextualise what you're doing and what you are experimenting and learning with, with what other people are doing and experimenting and trying and valuing and there's so much change in higher education at the moment, partly because the students are changing, all the mental health stuff and

Sure

You know there's all that kind of wellbeing stuff, so things need to be different, plus students have much more financial pressure on them in this country than they did five years ago… So there's different things about what might work and expectations and how… how you can support independent learning and performance and achievement but also not discriminate those who actually are just trying to pay their bills but can't cos they're gotta do stuff

Yeah, yeah

Um so I think there's... I suppose it's part of being... going like, trying things, and always having good intentions and then always realising ooh, but, ooh what about this? Ok and trying to do that and being in a small department it becomes too self-referential to... to be able to evaluate your stuff and that and [department] goes through a lot of change, which is also maybe not such a good... we're so busy trying to improve things and maybe some of that's actually not... I think that maybe trying to do too many innovative things and improve things and respond to stuff but it's good that we're always trying to improve things but actually a little bit more... just let it clock along so that people have more time in their space… Just to be in your office to talk to students rather than changing paperwork might be helpful and obviously all of the systems at the university have changed so things were, you know…

Sure

So I think a lot of the community of practice is also, you then have something that you go to, not necessarily... sometimes to contribute, but often just to take <u>away</u> things and reflect on what you're doing and hear of other things, like 'ooh maybe that' or 'ok, that's a challenge other people are having in a different way' and so it's not just us, it's related to that, so, so it's just <u>helpful</u>

It can feed you too

Yeah… So I think [award] is more about being interested in the policies and the… And the thinking

Yeah, being part of that

Yeah and also feeling more of a sense of community with the university as... because I've done lots of [CPD scheme] stuff and been in other communities of practice and collaborated with lots of you in XXXX and stuff, I have a sense of community across the university which in some sense is stronger than my sense of community within the department… so I don't, I don't feel the department offers me much opportunity for growth, so doing [award] enables me to grow… And have space to grow.

…………………..

Extract from Alison's interview transcript

Um, I do these sorts of courses probably every three or so years, where it just gives you a space to think about what you want to do

Yeah

And so I identified that Springboard would be a place to <u>do</u> that, um, and actually, when I was at XXXX [old institution] I went with a colleague on a course that XXXX ran, and XXXX was part of this consortium but no one ever went from XXXX we were the first people to ever go, and it was about planning your research career and they said 'where d'you wanna be in three year's time?', and both me and her independently wrote I want to be working at a research intensive institution and within two years we both were, we'd both left XXXX

Cos it plants a seed, it helps to plant and embed a seed doesn't it

It just clarifies to you what it is that you're thinking about and it gives you a structure to, a structure to your thinking, so Springboard was, I don't think it particularly changed any ideas that I had about who I am as a person or those sorts of things

Yeah, I know

But it did for some people you could see some people were really sort of like shocked, cos I'm XXXX so I tend to think about these things anyway

Yeah

Actually I was thinking about Springboard today on my way home in anticipation of this [interview] because actually I'm not sure it <u>was</u> a <u>brilliant</u> experience, I think, some people when they do Springboard they make lifelong friends and they really bond with people and our group just didn't really seem to do that although actually there were three of us in my cohort from the same School and we <u>did</u> bond, the three of us, but we weren't in the same groups or anything like that and the other people, I probably could only name a couple of people who were there… but it crystalized the way that I was thinking about my career and also, what I found really helpful were the talks from other women in the university and there were some really, really good ones, and they were very personal and you're not allowed to talk about who they were

No no sure

But… the experiences and the anger that some of these senior women had and were continuing to have kind of made you feel that you weren't alone in those feelings of rage

So can I stop you there, that's really interesting that you say that because I don't think of you as an angry person [laughs] so, where is that anger and what is that about?

[pause] Stuff like… I think, XXXX university is really bad at putting its money where its mouth is when it comes to women's careers, and it, it's <u>so</u> embedded that they can't see it themselves

I know

So you know, the fact that I had to point out to XXXX [VC] that XXXX wasn't on the board and she <u>still</u> isn't on the board, you know, that's… and yeah, I know that there's now, you've got XXXX and XXXX on [senior management board], but they're both job sharers, you know, there's no woman on there who's not a job sharer

Yeah

Um, things like um, so XXXX [colleague] won an award recently with two people from XXXX [another School] and I pointed out to the marketing, to the press team, but I also copied in XXXX [this colleague] and XXXX [mentor] that the men both got called Professor several times and were referred to as experts in blah blah blah and XXXX was referred to by her first name and it said that she'd worked on something, it was, the <u>whole</u> project was her idea, and yet they [the men] were the experts and she'd worked on it and you know, that's what makes me cross at XXXX

Yeah

Teaching and learning, I think it's gaining more value, but it's still seen at the coal face as being the second-class job… you know I've been in meetings in XXXX where people were

joking about, you know, oh you better get that published or – horror, horror – you'll be put on a TI contract!

Really?

In front of several people on TI contracts, yeah, and then, when you say 'actually I'm on a TI contract' they say, oh no but XXXX we know that <u>you</u> do research, like, that's kind of not the point

No

We raised it, when we had unconscious bias training in the department, I'd not been there long, and me and the other TI person and a couple of Teaching Fellows, we were saying how we felt that people didn't appreciate what we were doing, um, and everybody in the room denied it and I was like, you know who you are, who've said that you'd rather die than be on a TI contract, and people looked a bit sheepish, but you know, those things make me angry

And that's <u>all</u> about status isn't it? It's all about the status that the two have, like your phrase second class citizen

Yeah, and even amongst, you know when you look at the women who are, who've been important throughout my career, so XXXX, er XXXX, but the women who are older than me who've been very successful are also the women who didn't get married and didn't have children, and XXXX did have children but she had them when she was like XXXX [very young] so, before her career, and they're all people who didn't understand the decisions I made as a, as a newly married young mother

I know

To <u>not</u> go down that research route and it still feels like in academia that you can't be a researcher and a parent successfully, there are some exceptions, I don't know if you know XXXX? She left actually, about XXXX but she was a phenomenally successful researcher and mother of XXXX kids, but she was very, very disciplined in how she did it, um, but a really nice person as well, and I think she was a real <u>loss</u> to our department because she was a clear role model to people that you could do research and you could be a mother and you didn't have to be a dick about it

That's really important

And when she left I emailed her that and said you were always a role model because you managed to do all these things and not be a dick [both of us laughing] and she replied saying it's nice to know that I'm not a dick, I said, that's only my opinion

[both still laughing]

But you know, there were, the people who made my life difficult as a [role] were all male researchers with very little time for teaching and learning but who felt that they knew more about teaching and learning than me, and didn't respect that <u>that</u> was my responsibility, so you know, there were a couple of people, both of whom have subsequently left, who you know, would, they wouldn't just not do their [task], they would argue that XXXX was XXXX and therefore they couldn't take part in XXXX… [sighs]… This is a sector wide expectation, get on with it… I'm not interested in your philosophical approach to teaching and learning, get on with it, do your XXXX

[me laughing]

And the thing is that they were, they, when XXXX [colleague] took over as [new role] she had trouble with these two people in particular because they basically bullied her and she felt as a young woman, junior to them, that they, she felt that she couldn't talk to them about these things.

Yeah

In one case I was in the XXXX and a situation occurred and I went with her to deal with it because she didn't feel that she would be able to deal with it and I think, you know, it's not just about… I think that's an important point, is that researchers don't recognise your expertise in teaching and learning because they think that their expertise is equal to yours, even though they only teach for five hours a year, and their postdoc does their marking, but you know, they've got an opinion on it and their opinion is valid and it's more valid than yours, I think because they are researchers

Yes

You know, there's that imbalance

Yeah

And it's mostly men, but there are women who do it as well.

………………

Appendix E Colour codes used for main themes

Main theme	Highlighter pen Colour	
Career Journeys		Pink
Experiences of Gender in HE		Blue
Impact and Benefits of Professional Recognition		Yellow
Motivations		Orange
Professional identity		Green
Values		Purple
Mentoring		Green M

Appendix F Electronic version of thematic wall map with RQs

Research Question 1.	Research Question 2.	Research Question 3.
What can we learn from the career journeys of women who champion teaching in higher education?	*What prestige, if any, do mid-career women associate with senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?*	*How do mid-career women articulate the impact of achieving senior categories of teaching fellowships in higher education?*
Theme: Career journeys	**Theme: Motivations for seeking PR and/or award**	**Theme: Impact of PR and awards**
Patchwork careers and lack of career planning	Investment in CPD	Feeling part of a community of practice
Experience of promotions process	To capture/articulate achievements in teaching	Opportunity to network
Progression from P/T, sessional, TF status – generally a difficult journey	Awareness about the prestige element of SFHEA/PFHEA/UTF/NTF etc	The institution becomes a bigger place
Other challenges encountered in career journeys	To support application for promotion	Sense of being valued by the institution and appreciating the institution for investing in these awards
Emotional impact of perceived inequality and negative impact on health	Love of teaching and believing PR and awards are meaningful and important	Wanting to do useful work – the institution gains
Modest levels of ambition, balanced with other priorities in life	To set an example to colleagues and to be able to support them through the process	Emails of congratulations from colleagues mean a lot
Optimism about opportunities	Realisation about belonging to CoP	Finding a voice to articulate achievements in teaching
How career progression works	Was encouraged to do it by line manager/colleagues or told to do it, e.g. School directive	Notion of 'internal prestige' and validation, and confidence boost
Perceptions about gender in HE/the institution	As a starting point	The snowball effect of professional recognition
Discomfort at the university initiatives to address the gender gap/experiences of these	**Theme: Anticipated impact of PR and awards (overlap with RQ3)**	
Imposter syndrome and modesty/lack of confidence	Recognition as a type of prestige, of credibility and authority	
Research-teaching tension and marketisation	Professional recognition as an enabler, as a door opener	
Ethnicity and gender	Supported case for promotions	
Experiences of motherhood/family life alongside careers		
Theme: Professional identity		
Expressions of identity		
Identity as teacher v. academic		
Multiple and at times competing identities		

Theme: Values
Valuing good relationships and colleagues and collaboration
Valuing a fulfilling, interesting and varied career (-v- vertical progression)
Valuing meaningful, useful work
Being authentic and having integrity
Valuing CPD – as a constant in their careers
Valuing teaching
Valuing family/other things besides work
Theme: Importance of mentoring
Appreciation of good mentoring and role models
Regret about lack of good mentoring and role models
Wanting to be a good mentor to others

Appendix G Extract from final seven 'theme tables'

Extract from "Career Journeys" theme table with sub-theme of "Patchwork careers and lack of career planning"

Main theme	Sub-theme	Interviewee	My comments	Useful quotations and transcript page numbers
Career journeys	Patchwork careers and lack of career planning		Not one of my research participants had set out with a clear career plan to be in teaching and/or academia, they'd found both via a circuitous route. One or two had set out on a clear career path in a specific profession, and taken a different turn along the way into academia and discovered they enjoyed teaching. Some had simply had no plan at all, but had gone to university and taken it from there.	
		Charlotte	One thing led to another, there wasn't a plan at the outset, but got involved in XXXX publications which sold well, and international work, which also helped	p.12 I've learned a <u>huge</u> amount about everything... so yeah... I didn't really have any, um, I was originally going to be a bit more research orientated, as in xxxx research rather than education research, because that's what I'd seen everyone else do p.13 so yeah when I came in I never really had any idea that I'd end up here...I never considered it, if that makes sense, I never knew that I'd end up here, from there...

		Tessa	There was no plan, apart from not wanting to ever be a teacher, it was all kind of accidental for quite a while but always invested in CPD to develop skills and knowledge. Noted what others she looked up to had done, and how they'd got there. Has had an incredibly varied and fulfilling career and has followed interests rather than vertical progression.	p.2 I mean not that I had any great life plan p.3 I was very lucky, but I landed on my feet p.6 I mean it was all a little bit accidental I think see p.29 [which I've included under Values] …a little bit accidental and a little bit random…
			Lots of serendipity which led to her becoming a best-selling author in her discipline	[See quotation on p. 5 which I've also referenced below under how career progression works]
		Juliet	Again, same lack of career planning expressed by others, it all sort of happened	p.1 I don't think I ever meant to become an academic, it was all a bit of a surprise
		Barbara	Same story – lack of career planning – found herself in academia, was in the right place at the right time – classic patchwork career, starting out doing P/T teaching as a graduate student, then P/T as a mother, then built a solid career for herself on these foundations Interesting language – 'winding up here' and 'I wound up here' – accidental nature is emphasised	p.1 [it] wasn't on my radar at all… p.2 I suddenly found myself with a job part of my way through my PhD which wasn't what I expected at all, not part of the plan but I ended up doing it p.2 I was doing bits and pieces p.5 life came in and it all became easier to do what I was doing, which was exactly the same when the children were born, except that it became easier to do that part time p.6 then winding up here was in, in many ways an accident really. It wasn't something I planned… so the timing worked which is how come I wound up here
		Heather	Lack of planning, it was accidental, was in the right place at the right time and ended up working with some academics who went onto become big players in their field	p.5 So it was just accidental, I finished doing my xxxx [postgraduate qualification] I finished that and I guess was sort of thinking now what do I do, and then in the same department and the same university, um the, the job offer, these jobs came available, and the area that they were focusing on was around

				XXXX [topic] which is what I'd done my xxxx [dissertation/thesis] on, so it kind of seemed 'oh I'll go and apply for that'… but it was, it was more about just the opportunity sitting there right in front of me so I applied for it… p.5 Erm and, and at the time I think you don't realise what you've, what you've got, you know, you just think you want a job… but now I look back and I realise how incredibly important those years were for many, many reasons… so, so I value it almost more now than I did at the time [laugh]
		Emma	She did have a career plan, which she pursued from school and achieved, but then accidentally took a different turn and ended up in teaching, that part wasn't really planned at all	p.4 I knew from fourteen what I wanted to do and I'm fairly single minded and just kept going
		Donna	Like many others, went down an academic route accidentally, despite working in industry too. Clear evidence of patchwork career for her and related frustrations, including that the university promotions system isn't set up to recognise or understand people with her career profile and patchwork experiences – even though at the same time they highly value the professional/real world experience What she really cares about is being able to grow and develop	p.3 and then by the time I finished that was starting to enjoy doing research and someone going 'oh why don't you stay and do an MA and do that part time' cos I needed to work p.3 I was freelancing and doing very early career teaching stuff… and then went and worked in XXXX p.11 I think, I think some of it was frustration with career development and the fact of, that might be because of the lack of – it was frustration in terms of research stuff and personal titles stuff not necessarily being successful because I wasn't getting enough publications, and perhaps I hadn't argued about the disjointed career enough and the professional practice, and so it was a bit of a… I needed to do something… yeah, so maybe it was doing it for the... to recognise what I <u>had</u> done, um, if the system at that stage wasn't looking at stuff

				She comments on those who have had less rich experience but who fit the archetypal academic profile and have progressed more easily as a result	p.21 XXXX Or to value what you might have to bring, and when you see people who've gone very linearly from degree, study and into the job and you just go well, how can they be so, paid so, how can <u>they</u> have so much more to offer? They have different stuff to offer but just cos you've been at one place shouldn't, it shouldn't make, be such a big gap and it shouldn't have to be so hard to have to argue for this, and all of that kind of stuff it's...
				The frustrations she expresses about others being more highly valued (in the prestige economy) is very similar to those expressed by Emma	...It is tiring and I suppose I'm at the stage where I'm like no, maybe I've had enough of all of this
				It's tiring and she hasn't made peace with it yet. There's more on p.21 in relation to this but I'm referencing it under Impact on health below and also in Values about the type of work she desperately wants to do and see potential for.	p.28 But it's you know that richness doesn't... the richness looks like on the CV it looks like, unfocused, unreliable... it doesn't look good on paper
				Very specifically refers to the fact her CV hasn't benefited from it	
			Louise	Like everyone else her career wasn't planned, it kind of happened that she ended up in academia and she's also had a varied career because she's juggled other roles outside of academia too	p.6 cos I didn't know this [teaching role at the university] was coming... it kind of just came from nowhere, I'd already applied to and was due to start in [date] to train to be a XXXX as well which is a X year part time degree so, so I was taking on brand new teaching and then every other XXXX was [a student] at xxxx [another institution] ...but as part of that training you have to do XXXX so I had to drop down to [part-time] in order to fit that in

				And then having gone to XXXX days I never... so far, have never gone back up
		Kate	Also had no set career plan, fell into teaching	p.1 so I think like many people I kind of fell into doing what I was doing p.2 so I fell into this role [indicates map] as I was finishing my [post-graduate qualification], needed something to keep me going, when my funding ran out, and there happened to be a role here that I happened to be vaguely qualified to do, um, without any teaching experience at all, it's just the subject matter I was experienced in, Yes And, so I ended up there, really, and, um, found I really, really enjoyed it, I really, really enjoyed uh teaching, I really enjoyed teaching XXXX
		Fiona	The theme of lack of career planning extends to now as well as the early years – she realises, through drawing her career map, that she's come to a bit of a standstill. She was just seeking out interesting experiences (see Values) First time she started thinking about a career, seriously, was after many years when she decided to do a postgraduate qualification, up until that point it has been 'just teaching'. Later, she became strategic in her approach to promotion, she had a plan, it was the first time she'd acted strategically to develop her career.	p.1 Cos it's already made me realise that I've come to a bit of a standstill, and I need to address that [later] p.22 I've come to a standstill, yeah, I really do feel that... so I'm not sure what I'll do about it, but I will do something about it p.2 and I never really planned to teach, but I wanted to XXXX, so I thought well I'll teach for a year or two and then I'll go back to XXXX [home country], and that was always my plan... ... but instead of going back to XXXX [home country] after, I was teaching in a XXXX school there, um, I really, I enjoyed the teaching much more, and I definitely wanted to continue XXXX p.9 And that, that really got me thinking about a career, that was the first time I really thought career wise p.21 Yes, and that's the first time I've done that

Appendix H Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework

Phase	Description of the process for this study	Outputs for this study
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	Analysing career journey maps prior to interviews Transcribing interviews in Word Anonymisation, reading Sense checking & 'noticing' Informing subsequent interviews	Post-it notes for maps 15 x narrative interviews 45-60 mins duration each Each transcript average of 9,500 words, 25 sides of A4 each
2. Generating initial codes	Getting close to the data Writing summary accounts Annotating & highlighting transcripts Open coding Noticing relationships, parallels & contrasts across interviews	A5 notebooks containing summaries, approx. 3,000 words each Annotated transcripts Lists of potential sub-themes 'Overview' notebook capturing observations
3. Searching for themes	Identifying main themes Further refining codes/sub-themes	Initial thematic wall map of sub-themes using post-its 'Overview' notebook capturing observations
4. Reviewing themes	Reviewing, sorting, condensing and confirming themes and sub-themes Colour coding for main themes Returning to transcripts to colour code themes in margins	Colour-coded transcripts to easily identify main themes
5. Defining and naming themes	Re-visiting themes and sub-themes in relation to research questions and conceptual framework Checking 'the essence' for each theme Capturing my comments and key participant quotations from all transcripts Identifying relevant map extracts for each theme/sub-theme	Thematic wall map including main themes, sub-themes and research questions Neat Word version of wall map in table format Seven tables in Word, one for each main theme containing quotations/my comments against all sub-themes (each table between 4,000-23,000 words)
6. Producing the report	Moving from informal handwritten notes to typewritten documents to formal thesis writing	Presentation of initial findings at virtual International Conference on Gender Research July 2020 Final thesis