University of Reading

Exploring leadership identity development through the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers in England.

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Abstract

This study explores leadership identity development through examining the professional lived experiences of a group of female secondary school headteachers in the south of England because women continue to be under-represented in this role. Much of the extant literature in this field points to the reasons as to why women do not take on this position of leadership and focuses often on deputy headteachers, mixed gender sample groups or the global perspective. Thus, there is a gap in the empirical knowledge and understanding of what factors have supported and enabled female secondary school headteachers to take on the role locally and how the construction of a leadership identity over time aids advancement to senior leadership. Therefore, guided by four open research sub-questions relating to four interconnecting concepts of leadership, identity, values and gender, this thesis aims to answer the main research question:

> What can be learnt from the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers which can inspire and support aspirant female headteachers to become leaders?

This interpretivist and social constructionist study involves twelve female secondary school headteachers in the south of England. The qualitative research methods employed involved a pre-interview task of drawing a River of Life to enable the participants to reflect prior to the interview on their professional lived experiences over time. Then, the women took part in individual narrative interviews which further explored the key concepts of leadership, identity, values and gendered career experiences. The data from the interviews were analysed inductively, reflexively and iteratively using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis in order to actively generate themes to answer four research sub-questions.

To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first time that leadership identity development of female secondary school headteachers in England has been explored in this way. The main findings of the study illustrate that the women's core sense of purpose and

leadership identity are congruent and that their leadership identity development has been influenced by notable people, critical episodes and epiphany moments at different stages of their careers. This thesis also provides further insight into the connections between social identity theory, social identity theory of leadership and theories of how leaders develop through lived experience within the context of women in educational leadership. Synergies are drawn with existing leadership identity development models. The findings have wider implications for informing future leadership programmes in the secondary school sector as well as educational policy and practice. Further recommendations for research are highlighted at the end of the thesis.

Declaration of Original Authorship

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Sarah Marston

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I would like to thank the twelve inspirational women who kindly gave up their time to be participants in this study. Listening to their stories has been a privilege and I have learnt so very much about what it means to be an effective leader from them.

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Glossary of Terms

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DfE	Department for Education
ECT	Early Career Teacher
LA	Local Authority
LIDM	Leadership Identity Development Model
MAT	Multi-Academy Trust
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
RQ	Research Question
SAT	Single Academy Trust
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the chapter

This thesis presents an exploration into the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers in the south of England. Through examining the career trajectories of women in these roles, the study seeks to contribute further knowledge on what supports women's career progression into headship, focusing specifically on the development of female leadership identity in education. The research is justified because women continue to be under-represented in secondary phase headteacher roles (40%), even though 63% of teaching staff in secondary schools are female (Department for Education [DfE], 2022a). Pleasingly, this number is slowly increasing with 46% of all new secondary headteachers being female (2020), up from 38% (2011) and 43% (2016) (DfE, 2022a), despite the well-documented barriers to advancement to female educational leadership (O'Conor, 2015). Recent data also demonstrates that females are typically reaching secondary headteacher posts after twenty-one years in the profession and men after twenty years (DfE, 2022a). However, the role of headteacher is still regarded as a complex and demanding position of leadership, largely due to the constant policy shifts a headteacher must embrace (Glazzard & Stones, 2021) and the impact of a "neoliberal agenda" (Jones, 2017, p.907). Indeed, the data highlights that for the 2015 cohort of secondary headteachers (men and women), 75% of these headteachers were still in post after three years but only 63% after five years (DfE, 2022a).

Scholars posit that positive leadership experiences increase the salience of leader identity and that strong identification as a leader connects to increased leadership effectiveness (Day & Sin, 2011). Additionally, it is suggested in the extant literature, that there is scope for more empirical research on how exploring career trajectories can deepen understanding of how leaders develop and adopt a leadership identity, which in turn leads to creating effective leaders (Day & Sin, 2011). According to Ibarra et al. (2014) "identity has emerged

as a potent force in understanding leadership" (p.285). Within this study, the term leadership identity is defined as the degree to which individuals encompass views of oneself as a leader (Moorosi, 2020) and also the views of oneself in relation to other people, as well as the goals and purpose of leadership tasks (Priest et al., 2018). Prior research attests that if one sees oneself as a leader, one's motivation to lead is enhanced and the individual is more engaged in the leadership process. This in turn promotes the individual to seek out opportunities to develop leadership skills. Moreover, a strong leadership identity also implies that there is clarity in the relationship between the leader and their followers (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

This initial chapter highlights the wider contemporary and general context of secondary education to provide essential background information on the environment these women work within. This introduction also refers to some of the national and global research regarding women in headteacher positions in secondary school phase education and also to research on leadership identity development in order to give deeper justification for this study. The chapter also explains the positionality of the researcher, the research objectives and questions, the theoretical and conceptual framework and the research methodology. Furthermore, it makes clear the knowledge gaps this study seeks to fill, as well as its intended contribution to research and to professional practice and policy. The chapter concludes by explaining how the following chapters of the whole thesis have been organised.

1.2 The thesis in context

Through examining career histories, this study will explore how leadership identities of female secondary school headteachers in England are developed over the course of a career trajectory. This research is justified as women continue to be under-represented in headteacher positions in secondary schools, indicating a potential lack of female leadership role models in the sector and a possible void of diversity of opinion within leadership teams, which could subsequently impact on effective strategic and operational decision-making (Latu et al., 2013). It focuses on the female headship of a group of secondary phase state-

funded schools in the south of England. These schools are regularly inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and overseen by a governing body which contributes to the strategic direction of the school, monitors financial performance and holds the headteacher to account. The geographical reach of this thesis includes headteachers from the south of England, a geographical spread which helps to anonymise the participants in what is known to be a close-knit professional community.

In order to provide context for this study and deeper understanding of the participants' working environments, this next section will present a brief historical background to how recent policies and reforms in education have emerged. Indeed, education is subject to constant change and over the years, education policy has been influenced by strategies of public services reform, with many initiatives having parallels to sections of the public sector. Many reforms to education started during the Conservative era (1979-1997) and were often critiqued for being London focused because educational 'think-tanks' were London-based. Consequently educational policy-makers were criticised for cutting off innovation from outside London (Ball, 2021).

During this period, educational power also shifted from Local Authorities, classrooms and schools to the centre. For example, in 1988, the Education Reform Act was introduced by the Conservative government which brought in the National Curriculum as well as a sequence of national testing and attainment levels. Unfortunately, this meant that pupil outcomes from a teacher became visible and this caused a degree of hostility within the sector (Ball, 2021). As part of a broader New Right change agenda, the aim of these initiatives was to create a competitive market within state education and across the public sector (Forrester, 2000). League tables were published from 1992 and common parlance included "good" schools and "bad" schools. In 1993, the Education Act was legislated which outlined measures to tackle "failing" schools (Ball, 2021, p.128). Then, in May 1997, the New Labour government built on these policies, frequently advocating the importance of raising "standards" in education through the use of targets (Ball, 2021, p.130) and through putting failing schools under the microscope to be turned around. Academy schools were henceforth introduced in the early 2000s by the New Labour government so that standards could be driven upwards by giving more power and freedom to the headteachers over pay,

length of the school day, term times and the curriculum, reducing the number of schools financed by Local Authorities (Gunter & McGinty, 2014).

In tandem with these reforms, New Labour developed a leader-centric rhetoric, putting a stronger emphasis on the headteacher to generate improvement (Gunter & Forrester, 2010). Consequently, the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) was created by New Labour to train aspiring headteachers, with headteachers becoming the focus of national investment and the answer to educational change (Gunter & Forrester, 2010), because New Labour believed existing school leadership was not effective in achieving the standards-based reforms. Headteachers were required to complete a mandatory National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH), yet the need for headteachers to hold the Qualified Teacher Status was interestingly removed. One of the reasons for this decision was due to there being a lack of headteachers, resulting in a search for headteachers outside of the state sector and even education (Gunter & Forrester, 2009).

The Coalition government continued with this theme and started to partner poor performing schools with stronger schools under a system entitled “academy conversion” (Ball, 2021, p.131) and what originally began as an intention to improve inner city schools, evolved into an objective to improve all schools (Gunter & McGinty, 2014). In 2010, an Academies Act was brought into play by the incoming Conservative government to enable more schools to become academies (Goodman & Burton, 2012). Since then, the number of children being taught in academies has been steadily growing and approximately 53% of all pupils were attending an academy (secondary and primary phase) in 2022 (DfE, 2022b). Furthermore, 39% of primary schools, 80% of secondary schools and 43% of special schools were classed as academies (DfE, 2022b).

Academies are run by Academy Trusts which can either be ‘Single Academy Trusts’ (SATs), so the school operates as its own entity, or ‘Multi-Academy Trusts’ (MATs) and therefore part of a group of schools. MATs are often led by ‘Chief Executive Officers’ (CEOs) who have previously held the role of headteacher and could also be known as ‘Executive Headteachers’ because the post holds managerial responsibility for more than one school. Some schools also adopt the term ‘Principal’ to denote the role of the headteacher and all

these titles will be referred to within the stories of the headteachers in this thesis. The headteachers involved in this study work in a variety of school settings, although all but one of the schools in the research are part of an Academy Trust. In addition, all the women in this study lead schools which are mixed gender on entry and none of the schools have a specific religious character. All but two of the schools led by the participants are non-selective and the schools involved in the research offer education to pupils from 11-18 years old although some are open to different age ranges due to the nature of the curriculum the school provides. More details on the contextual environments of the participants are to be found in chapter three (section 3.5).

At the time of writing this study, a new white paper was published (DfE, 2022c) which set out the proposed future direction of education from the government, stating that by the year 2030, all children would be taught as part of a MAT, benefitting from the evidence-based collaborative nature of Trusts of schools. Indeed, the number of SATs has declined since 2016 whilst the number of MATs has expanded (DfE, 2020). The aim from the government is for Trusts to educate approximately 7,500 pupils, or to have ten schools within their Trust by 2030.

However, despite the aim to raise standards through academisation, studies have also highlighted potential pitfalls of this movement. For example, Rayner at al. (2018) identified, via a case study of a Church of England High School, that working with other schools could cause some members of the school community to worry about the Ofsted grading of their own school being weakened by that of a new school to the Trust performing less well. Headteachers from the north of England who took part in a qualitative study on the promised autonomy of academisation (Thompson et al., 2020), explained that they felt they had potentially less autonomy and that they still felt their jobs were precarious or that there was a possible loss of their cohesive community. When looking specifically at primary schools, Eyles et al. (2017) discovered that academisation had no average effect on pupil performance.

Thus, it would seem likely that the headteachers in this study are currently facing pressure to either expand their network of schools or join a group of schools. Additionally, these

headteachers could be navigating constant external educational change and challenges whilst managing a myriad of other demands within their institutions. Furthermore, to add to the constant changes affecting the educational sector, many headteachers are deciding to leave the profession due to the challenges of the role (Belger, 2022). Coupled with this issue, teacher training providers are struggling to recruit new teachers to the profession with data showing a 36% shortfall of the target figure to initial teacher training (Times Educational Supplement, 2022). Both problems together could potentially create a perfect storm of a vacuum of future new leaders. Therefore, this research is of vital importance because it aims to highlight successful stories into leadership which can be used to inform professional practice and policy, particularly policy on senior leadership and professional development.

The responsibility for preparation for school leadership in England has also recently moved from Local Authorities and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), to Teaching Schools, Teaching Alliances and MATs. Typically in England, after achieving Qualified Teaching Status (QTS) and often a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), teachers have completed a year of mandatory induction during their first year of employment. This was formally known as the Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) period of induction and has now become a two year induction, known as the Early Career Teacher (ECT) induction. Leaders in education have then conventionally inhabited roles of middle leadership and if interested in becoming headteachers, have undertaken leadership preparation programmes such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), although the NPQH is no longer mandatory since 2012. For some educationalists, the decision by the government to remove the NPQH as compulsory in order to give more freedom to schools to make their own decisions, was a backward step (Bush, 2013). Yet, the NPQH had been subject to criticisms of being too easy, too reliant on competencies or based on a standardised model of leadership (Bush, 2013). Therefore, the NPQH was revised to become optional and more aligned to Master's level qualifications involving a wider and more diverse range of organisations (Bush, 2013). Furthermore, in a wave of more change, April 2013, the Coalition government decided to merge the NCSL with the Teaching Agency to become the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) so as to bring leadership and high quality teaching under one umbrella. In 2018, this organisation was replaced by the

Department for Education and the Teaching Regulation Agency by the Conservative government which focused more on policy and responsibilities as opposed to leadership training.

Interestingly, Cliffe (2016) cites that although some leadership development is still instructed, most leadership learning now takes place through lived professional and personal experiences. In an investigation funded by a British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration society regarding opportunities for leadership and development, thoughts and perspectives from aspiring and existing headteachers were collated via interviews by Cliffe et al. (2018). Cliffe et al. (2018) identified that although the senior leaders in their study spoke readily about school partnership ventures for developing leadership, they also cited differences in the opportunities available, thus highlighting a potential variance between schools regarding leadership development. Therefore, this more ad hoc approach to leadership development could be further perpetuating inequality in leadership teams, particularly as the NPQH is no longer mandatory. Plus, the role of the headteacher will consequently also involve internally developing the leadership of others on top of the general leadership and management of the organisation. Most leadership opportunities cited in the study (Cliffe et al., 2018) were facilitated in-house or stemmed from whole school leadership roles, experiences echoed by the headteachers in a study by Glazzard and Stones (2021). Notably, when exploring the views of aspiring headteachers in particular, the participants gave insight into factors influencing their decision to not apply for the position, such as lack of confidence in their ability to do the role and the perception that the role would bring with it additional, negative pressures (Cliffe et al., 2018).

1.3 Identifying the problem

The findings from this current study aim to unearth new knowledge on what leads women to construct salient leader identities in education and to subsequently influence policy and professional practice on women's leadership identity development. The impetus for this study came from the researcher's own experiences of being a senior leader in a secondary school in an all-male senior leadership team and who is now a female leader in the Higher

Education sector working with secondary schools in the field of teacher training. Whilst working as a senior leader in a secondary school, the researcher felt acutely aware of her internal and external competing identities of mother, wife, daughter, teacher and female educational leader and these tensions have consequently led the researcher to question how women successfully reconcile such identities to achieve identity congruence, confidence and a strong sense of self. Hence, how gendered leadership identities are developed and maintained over time in accordance with the other identities a woman holds will be a key outcome for this study.

Within the canon of educational leadership, much of the literature documents the hurdles women face in career advancement. For example, it has been proposed that men are more likely to have positions of management and leadership in education because women still potentially face barriers of social injustice (Fuller, 2017). Fuller (2017) notes that although there has been progress in achieving more equality in the sector, there are still contestably disproportionate problems for women's advancement associated with childcare and/or interview selection processes. Interestingly, this observation was echoed in earlier studies by Coleman (2007) who described how female educational leaders can often be viewed as "outsiders" (p.2) because they do not fit the typical essentialist view of a masculine leader which is to be strong and agentic. Furthermore, women might lack confidence when applying for promotion, female teachers can be stereotyped into roles which are pastoral in nature and juggling family and a career can be perceived as difficult (Coleman, 2007). Indeed, recent data (DfE, 2022c) demonstrates that female and part-time teachers across the primary and secondary sectors are less likely to advance to headship and senior positions, with a proposed sixteen female leaders being promoted to senior leadership to every twenty males.

Over the years, research into secondary school leadership appears to have focused primarily on deputy and assistant headteacher roles (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Chagger, 2013; Guihen, 2017) highlighting the problems as to why teachers in senior positions might not wish to become headteachers, particularly when focusing on the phenomena for women. Much of the extant literature also appears to centre on mixed-gender studies, senior leadership, primary headteachers or headteachers outside the United Kingdom. For instance, Chagger

(2013) conducted semi-structured mixed-gender interviews with secondary school deputy and headteachers in the Birmingham area in England exploring why deputy headteachers might not wish to become headteachers and what support they felt they might need from the headteacher to do so. Themes such as the need for aspirant headteachers to manage self-confidence and the role talent management can play in promoting self-belief emerged. Similarly, Guihen (2017) also looked at secondary school deputy headteachers in England who might aspire to headship, also conducting semi-structured interviews but instead concentrating on an all-female sample. In Guihen's study (2017), lived experiences were examined and key findings highlighted that the reasons for female deputy headteachers not wanting to pursue headship range from factors such as geography, age, occupational stability or risk. For the women in Guihen's study (2017) who expressed a wish to advance to headship, the lure of having the power to enable life-changing moments for young people was apparent. Additionally, research in the field has also been conducted globally such as from Oplatka and Tamir (2009) who also investigated the career stories of female secondary school deputy headteachers. Their study found that the perceptions of headship from their participants showed a potential gendered view of leadership because the deputy role gives space to focus on relationships, whilst the role of the headteacher is perceived to be stressful, more formal and oriented towards administration. Within the primary educational sector, Lynch (2021) examined career journeys of assistant and deputy headteachers in primary schools, discovering that a woman's decision to become a headteacher of a primary school can depend on a number of factors, such as how much they have been supported by the headteacher, personal balancing of family responsibilities and managing the kaleidoscope of identities women can have.

More recently, research on headteachers has also focused on their potential resistance to neoliberalist reforms in education, reforms which might evoke a values-free approach (Fuller, 2019). This is in contrast to the Headteachers' Standards (DfE, 2020) which promote leading with professional values such as integrity, honesty and transparency. Equally, teachers arguably enter the profession to impact on social justice, positing a philosophy of inclusivity, rather than adherence to a prescribed curriculum, constant testing and an agenda of standards (Fuller, 2019). Hence, it would appear that being a headteacher is a challenging role and although often rewarding, the job comes with a pressure of

performativity along with constant educational reform. This in turn can lead to uncertainty of teaching practices, a potential detachment from the self and feelings of inauthenticity in the leader (Ball, 2003); all factors which could impact on a woman's desire to become a headteacher (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Consequently, a further justification for this study is to provide additional and contemporary local knowledge on the perspectives of women in the role, rather than from those aspiring (or not aspiring) to secondary school headship.

Moreover, studies into leadership identity development of female secondary school headteachers in England over the course of a career journey through examining lived experiences appear to be in the minority. The concept of leadership identity development is largely influenced by observational learning (Kempster, 2006) which in turn is based on the work of Bandura (1986), who cites that humans learn through experiencing the feelings caused through interaction with others. In a similar vein, Hogg (2001) also purports to the power of interplay with others in learning about the social world and in particular, learning about leadership. When learning about leadership, leadership can be regarded as a form of identity development because an individual will continually connect to their past self, through reflecting on their lived experiences, to their present self and even to their future or "provisional-selves" (Ibarra, 1999, p.764). Hence, leadership identity development is a process of "becoming" (Kempster, 2006, p.18), experienced through constant dialogical and relational patterns. As a consequence, becoming a leader is not an identity an individual can suddenly embody, instead developing a leadership identity is about negotiation and affirmation, ensuring it fits with the individual and the contextual community, a process which can take time.

Although research on leadership identity development as opposed to leadership development (Longman et al., 2019) is increasing, much of the research on leadership identity developmental processes through lived experiences has been conducted outside of the educational sector or with students of leadership rather than adult leaders. Also, much of the research has been conducted in other countries, particularly in the United States, or in other educational phases, such as primary (Jones, 2017; Lynch, 2021). For instance, in a study of thirty female leaders within the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities in the United States, Longman et al. (2019) found that having access to a network of influential

relationships helped women navigate challenges in the workplace. Another example stems from Komives et al. (2005), who derived a six-stage leadership identity development model (LIDM) from their examination of the life experiences of college students in America. These six-stages demonstrated how leaders develop their identity through moving from awareness of leadership through to the synthesis and integration of leadership identity over a period of time. In a similar vein, Miscenko et al. (2017) examined leader identity development over a seven week period by working with postgraduate students from a Dutch business school, discovering that leader identity is shaped by changes in leadership skills. A further example within the literature of how leadership identity develops over time comes from Moorosi (2013), who evaluated a leadership development programme offered to school leaders in South Africa. Moorosi (2013) discovered that leadership identity was shaped by the development of personal attributes, intersectionality and interacting with mentors or networks.

Overall, it therefore seems that much has been done to understand why there is a relative absence of female secondary school headteachers in England, yet the problem still exists, despite the gradual upward trend. Therefore, this study seeks to add further knowledge to the phenomena through responding to the overarching research question for this study:

> What can be learnt from the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers which can inspire and support aspirant female headteachers to become leaders?

1.4 The positionality of the author

As a female senior leader in Higher Education, remaining reflective of how to lead and manage others effectively and inclusively is essential and one of the reasons for this study was to aid the researcher to reflect on their own leadership identity development through examining that of others. Prior to working in Higher Education, the researcher was a senior leader in a secondary school and now works closely with secondary school leaders in developing trainee teachers and as stated earlier (section 1.3), comes to this study with

their own social experiences from their life, the role of headteacher and senior leader and the sector more generally (Cunliffe, 2003). Given that the researcher is embedded in the field, the researcher has adopted a reflexive approach to the writing and research of this study so as to acknowledge and be transparent about the role the researcher plays in shaping the research (Palaganas et al., 2017).

Reflexivity can be described as a process of constant internal dialogue which leads the researcher to critique and evaluate their positionality in addition to explicitly recognise that the position they hold could impact on the conduct of the research and its outcomes (Berger, 2013). Thus, being reflexive means reverting the research lens back onto the researcher themself so that the researcher can question their own situatedness and the impact this might have on the participants or the data collated (Berger, 2013). Therefore, it should be noted, for example, that because the researcher is female and interviewing females, then the participants could be more open to sharing their experiences of being a female headteacher, or the researcher's worldview and background could influence the way in which the researcher poses questions (Berger, 2013). Finlay (2002, p.212) refers to the process of engaging in reflexivity as "muddy", " perilous" and a "swamp" because it requires the researcher to query their own intersubjective understandings at the same time as focusing on the research participants. How to 'do' reflexivity is indeed much debated although "vigilance from within" has been expressed as a suitable goal (Pillow, 2003, p.177). How reflexivity has been embedded within the research process will also be discussed in the methodology (chapter 3).

Indeed, the researcher acknowledges that they are an "insider" which brings with it vital ethical responsibilities (Floyd & Arthur, 2012, p.171). Some of the participants of this study could be viewed as extended professional colleagues with the researcher being aware in advance of their institution's vision and ethos. Subsequently, the responsibility of the researcher to maintain anonymity and confidentiality becomes even more acute. Given that this study reveals the professional lived experiences of the participants, it takes care to not abuse the trust the women in this thesis have instilled upon the researcher and to not portray their lives in a way that might cause harm or reputational damage to them or the schools they lead (Sikes & Piper, 2010). Notably, this is a responsibility becoming

increasingly more common with the proliferation of educational doctorates which encourage reflective professional practice (Stephenson et al., 2006) although Lowery (2018) states “the reflexive and revelatory voice is mostly absent from the literature on culturally relevant practice and leadership” (p.3037). Hence, the approach adopted by the researcher throughout this study is reflexive so that the researcher can openly tend to the tensions of being inextricably linked with the sector might bring, aspects which will be discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter (section 3.9.1).

Therefore, the positionality of the researcher and aims for this study are multi-layered, because not only is the researcher a key resource for disseminating the outcomes of this study to the sector, but the researcher is also able to impact positively on leadership identity development on women in Higher Education, either through line managing potential female leaders or supervising researchers in this area, acting as a more reflexive and informed female role model, researcher and leader.

1.5 Research aims and research questions

This thesis explores the gendered professional lived experiences of a group of female secondary school headteachers in England to deepen understanding on how women construct their leadership identities over time with a view to informing future policy and professional practice on educational leadership development.

There is consequently one main research question which frames the purpose of the study which is:

> What can be learnt from the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers which can inspire and support aspirant female headteachers to become leaders?

Four research sub-questions (RQs) were formed after conducting the literature review of the theoretical and conceptual framework to help discover answers to the main research question:

1. What are the professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher?

2. How do the participants construct their leadership identity?

3. How do values shape their leadership identity?

4. How have the gendered lived experiences of the participants influenced their developing leadership identity?

Through exploring these open-ended questions, the aim of this study is to gather a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the participants and to analyse common themes associated with the theoretical and conceptual framework outlined in the next section to answer the main research question.

1.6 Overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study is an interlapping of four key concepts which are leadership, identity, values and gender. Discussion of the relevant, extant literature on these concepts gave rise to four research sub-questions in order to respond to the main research question. This part of the chapter gives a short synopsis of the key definitions used to guide the theoretical and conceptual framework.

For the purpose of this study, leadership is defined by Marchiondo et al. (2015) as “a process of mutual influence that unfolds across time and situations” (p.892). Thus, this study views leadership as a collective, social and developmental action. It also takes the stance that leadership is post-heroic (Fletcher, 2004), because although the top of the leadership

structure can still be inhabited by a figurehead, it is supported by teams of leaders distributed throughout the organisation. Further, post-heroic leadership is often perceived as feminine because it is associated with characteristics such as empathy, vulnerability and collaboration (Fletcher, 2004).

This research is also informed by the concept that leader identity is constructed socially and that a person becomes a leader through the internalisation of a leadership identity (Ibarra et al., 2013). Gecas (1982) adds to this definition expressing that identity is connected to the meanings which we attach to ourselves. Moreover, internalising an identity happens iteratively, so individuals need to refine their identity through continual identity work as described by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) "being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising" (p.1165). Therefore, this thesis takes the view that identity development is shaped through social interaction over time.

The concept of values is pertinent to the study because of its prominence in expected professional behaviours of headteachers and the debated tensions between leading with espoused values and values-in-action (Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020). Warwas (2014) states that although empirical explorations into headteachers' values are increasing, there is still a lack of evidence into how these values impact on a headteacher's leadership. Extant international research on school leadership asserts that it is driven by values, with personal values contestably influencing leadership actions relating to relationships, expectations and aspirations (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). This values-led approach has in turn been perceived to increase a person's authenticity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The chosen definition of values for this study comes from Kafa and Pashiardis (2020) "values are considered the perceptions, patterns and choices that guide the behaviour of an individual, influencing his/her views, decisions and actions" (p.442).

Given that there are more male than female secondary school headteachers, this study focuses on investigating how women develop their leadership identities. As a result, gender becomes a fourth key concept to guide the exploration of the women's lived professional experiences. Hence, this study will critically review some of the key theories and empirical debates on gender (de Beauvoir, 1949; Butler, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002) whilst considering

the current position of women in educational leadership in more depth, particularly because it has been suggested that women can still experience a "subtle gender bias" in organisations (Ibarra et al., 2013, p.1).

Additionally, due to its focus on the leadership identity development of female leaders within the social world, this study is underpinned by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and social identity theory of leadership (Hogg et al., 2001). Social identity refers to how a person sees themself in relation to their group membership which in turn gives the individual a sense of belonging if that relationship is seen as positive. Tajfel and Turner (1979) proposed that people follow three mental processes of social categorisation, social identification and social comparison in order to assess if an individual is in an "in-group" or an "outgroup" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p.225). Social identity theory of leadership (Hogg et al., 2001) builds on social identity theory asserting that social groups construct prototypical leaders who imbue the groups' identity, behaviours and values. The study is also guided by theories of leadership development through lived experience (Kempster, 2006) and presents extant literature on models of leadership identity development from the field of education.

1.7 Overview of the methodology

Ontologically, this thesis adopts an interpretivist and social constructionist approach because it focuses on the stories of individuals, seeking to explore the interpretations of the worlds of the participants (Cohen et al., 2011). The research is social constructionist because it strives to build knowledge on how we understand human beings through concentrating on thought processes and use of language, rather than observing external reality (Burr, 2015). Consequently, the methodology has been designed to hear and collate narratives with the aim of presenting findings which may also provoke reflections for the reader and the researcher.

The research design required the participants to complete a pre-interview task of drawing their career path via a 'River of Life', plotting their personal journey to headship pictorially

as a mixture of different streams and rivers. Then, the respondents were asked to take part in a narrative interview which asked the women to talk through their River of Life, revealing opportunities and barriers to leadership. The open, semi-structured questions employed in the narrative interview sought to further explore how the interviewees portray themselves as leaders, their leadership identity construction, their values and the impact of being a female in secondary phase headship. Exploring the career journeys of secondary school headteachers through using Rivers of Life does not appear to have been documented in the published literature to the best of the author's knowledge and is thus adding to the knowledge gap of this research tool. The interview data were transcribed and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step reflexive thematic analysis in order to identify patterns in the data which were important or interesting to the research sub-questions. The approach was purposefully reflexive because the qualitative and insider researcher of this study was the main research instrument and hence integral to uncovering meaning.

1.8 Significance and outcomes of the study

This study is important because it provides an innovative contribution to knowledge on the leadership identity development and career trajectories of female secondary school headteachers in the south of England. It extends understanding of female experiences of leading secondary schools aiming to influence training and development work for aspiring female headteachers. It seeks to discover ways to overcome the potential barriers women face during their paths to the top leadership roles and to empower future female leaders along their career trajectory.

Moreover, the research design of the study is also exploratory in nature as there appears to be a lack of research into the positives and limitations of using visual methods, such as a River of Life, in qualitative research and particularly with this phenomenon. Therefore it intends to inform this gap in knowledge of research methods. Research into leadership identity development over a lifespan also seems to be limited and particularly within the field of research on secondary school headship. As a consequence, the significance of this study is that it seeks to add new knowledge which is theoretical, methodological and

empirical. It also provides a deeper understanding of how female secondary school headteachers develop which will have vital implications in retaining and acquiring female educational leaders. Although the focus is on the secondary phase, the outcomes of this study might also apply to other female leadership roles in the educational sector.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

The thesis has nine chapters in total. Chapter two discusses the extant literature on the theoretical and conceptual framework leading to the creation of four research sub-questions. Chapter three describes the rational for the ontological and epistemological paradigm, the research design and how the data were collated and analysed to ensure trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017) along with methodological limitations. Chapters four, five, six and seven explain the findings from the data analysed via reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each chapter responds to each of the research sub-questions and chapter four also sets out the introduction to the four findings chapters. Chapter eight connects the findings and literature together so that the four research sub-questions are robustly explored and responded to. To conclude, chapter nine summarises the main learning points from the thesis and further highlights the original contribution to knowledge along with recommendations for future training, policy and practice.

1.10 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has stated the context and justifications for the research whilst explicating the rationale for the theoretical and conceptual framework involved in this study. Women continue to be under-represented in secondary school headship, despite the continued research and developing understanding of what can aid a women's advancement to leadership. Gendered issues associated with confidence, relationships and embedded societal and cultural expectations have been cited as inhibiting factors, mixed with negative perceptions of the role as being demanding, neoliberalist and performative. Driven by exploring the lived professional experiences of social actors, this interpretive and social constructionist study seeks to provide insight into how these women have constructed their

leadership identities over time through analysis of their narratives. It aims to unveil new knowledge into how leadership, identity, values and gender interconnect to support and guide women to become leaders and to form a salient leader identity.

The next chapter will build upon the aspects of the theoretical and conceptual framework already mentioned and provide a deeper understanding, through a more in-depth exploration and debate of the literature, of how these concepts overlap. The literature review will also provide more detail on the knowledge gaps, providing a rationale for the research sub-questions needed to answer the main research question.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the chapter

This study explores the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers in England to find out how they have constructed their leadership identities over time and what factors might have guided and supported them to become headteachers. The principal research question for this study, which stems from the contemporary situation regarding the relative absence of female secondary school headteachers, is as follows:

> What can be learnt from the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers which can inspire and support aspirant female headteachers to become leaders?

Given that the number of female secondary school headteachers is not yet equal to the number of their male counterparts, despite the prominence of women in the secondary sector, (40% female headteachers and 63% females in secondary education) (DfE, 2022a), it is important that researchers in this field, along with policy makers and leaders of professional development, extend their knowledge of how those women who occupy the post became headteachers. This chapter therefore reviews the extant literature on the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study, looking in turn at the four overlapping key concepts of leadership, identity, values and gender. It then presents theories of leadership identity development through lived experiences, outlining models of leadership identity development. It will draw upon studies from the United Kingdom as well as international work and includes research which has been conducted in the Higher Education sector and in other professional sectors, as well as within secondary and primary school phases. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the knowledge gaps this study seeks

to fill, a summary of the key themes from the chapter and the presentation of the four emergent research sub-questions and their rationale.

2.2 Leadership

Defining what this study means by leadership is vital if it is to explore the leadership of female secondary school headteachers, particularly as leadership continues to be a complex phenomenon contested by scholars, even more so as the amount of research on leadership grows. Day and Harrison (2007) even posit that leadership has become a "science" (p.360), whilst Hogg et al. (2012) purport that leadership is "ubiquitous" (p.258). Therefore, this part of the chapter explains key aspects of contemporary leadership, with leadership defined as an activity involving other people and different scenarios over time, as described by Marchiondo et al. (2015) "a process of mutual influence that unfolds across time and situations" (p.892).

How headteachers lead their school is a much discussed debate, particularly as to what steers leadership and how leadership is developed. Within the arena of educational leadership, leaders tend to use the needs of the learner to drive the school's vision and then develop teams to enact this mission (Pansiri, 2008). Therefore, the traditional leadership notion of one single heroic leader to promote leadership has changed so that effective leadership depends on teams of leaders (Spillane, 2005). Leadership debate on who is being led advocates that leaders need to know who they are leading because understanding one's followers can enhance the efficacy of leadership (Felfe & Schyns, 2010). Marchiondo et al. (2015) posit that leadership has now become a construct which is relational and less reliant on hierarchy. Instead, effective leadership emerges through positive interaction and acceptance from followers, akin to a reciprocal claim and grant process (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). As a result, leadership can be perceived as a social construct, rather than evolving from innate leadership traits (Kapasi et al., 2016), connected to the legitimacy of the leader and the leader's ability to symbolise the good of the community being led (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003).

This more contemporary way of viewing leadership is now promoted as being a post-heroic model (Fletcher, 2004) and less "leader-centric" (Day & Harrison, 2007, p.361), shifting the lens of leadership from individual to collective. Post-heroic theories of leadership are varied and include servant, shared, distributed, collaborative, community, embodied, aesthetic, discursive and relational, for example (Collinson, 2017). Fletcher (2004) argues that post-heroic models of leadership which are often presented as associated as gendered or power neutral are in fact deeply embedded in social interaction. Post-heroic leadership is multi-directional, enacted up, down and across an organisation and therefore, the positional leader should be open to being led and well as leading. Henceforth, post-heroic leadership recasts the relationship between the self and other, creating a less competitive culture (Fletcher, 2004). Furthermore, Fletcher (2004) posits that for post-heroic leadership to be truly transformational then it requires a leader to embody a new mental model of how to lead effectively, seeing oneself as interdependent rather than independent.

However, some of the extant literature suggests that post-heroic leadership gives females an advantage due to its focus on communal leadership (Fletcher, 2004). Recent leadership discourses contend that leadership which is post-heroic is rooted in domesticated images which are linked to females nurturing people, whereas heroic leadership connects to more masculine images of production in the working world (Prowse et al., 2022). Therefore, often when women practise post-heroic leadership, it is invisible and taken for granted, yet conversely when men are seen to enact it, they are seen and commended (Prowse et al., 2022). Yet, Fletcher (2004) attests that these images are in fact a myth, rather they are socially constructed and therefore it is not helpful to look at individual leaders or characteristics through a gendered lens. On the other hand, although it is understood that these characteristics do not essentially describe male and female behaviours, they can influence people to act in a gendered way with a suggestion that women might "do masculinity" in a quest to be seen as effective leaders (Fletcher, 2004, p.653). Arguably, post-heroic leadership is frequently presented as power and gender neutral, yet the opposite can often apply because it can reinforce stereotypical views of what a leader is and reassert a binary gender divide (Prowse et al., 2022). Rather, post-heroic leadership pertains to distributed or interdependent leadership activities which are said to increase

institutional outcomes (Klar et al., 2016) and be non-authoritarian and collective in nature (Ryoma, 2018), practised differently by men and women.

2.3 Identity

Within this current study on female secondary school headteachers, identity is perceived as a fluid construct which constantly evolves and changes after reflecting on the self, explained by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) as "people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising" (p.1165).

People learn about the self through their interaction with others and from the context in which they immerse themselves (Blose, 2022). Through encountering a variety of contexts and people, an individual's understanding of their self deepens and the individual consequently forms an identity. Building on this idea, Rodgers and Scott (2008) assert that individuals form their identities through the relationships they experience and therefore identities constantly shift as they are affected by emotions. Moreover, Rodgers and Scott (2008) suggest that people construct their identities through making sense of personal narratives. Gecas (1982) cites that the term 'identity' refers to the many meanings an individual can attach to oneself by the self and by others, thus taking the form of a self-conception, indicating that identities also rely on how humans interpret how others see them. These self-conceptions can exist in a social or personal manner and can also be examined in a temporal way, so that there are past, present, future or possible versions of the self, for example (Ibarra, 1999).

It is acknowledged in the literature that identities require a certain amount of work to be maintained because identities are rarely fixed but can be multi-layered (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Goffman (1963) notes that all roles in society have expectations of specific characteristics and behaviours associated to them and as such, the role-holder will adhere to these expectations in order to accord legitimacy, a concept which is pertinent to a study on high profile female educational leaders. Consequently, a key aim of a person's work on their identity is to act and look the part, yet at the same time to appear authentic. Thus,

identity work is also about how a person manages the discrepancies between who they are and who they need to be for the sake of others. This therefore poses intriguing questions for the development of leadership identities in women who may already feel like outsiders in a social group due to individual, organisational or societal negative factors (Coleman, 2007).

These are important points to consider when studying female headteachers because the large body of followers in a school could therefore potentially expect the leader to embody the views of their group into the headteacher's leader identity (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012). Additionally, the leader could feel under pressure to lose their previous "unwanted" or "unconscious" (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012, p.1218) selves to appear authentic. Indeed, Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) propose that in the work place, people play with their identities in order to actively trial a provisional or possible self. Yet, a possible self is vulnerable to environmental changes because it has not been rehearsed or refined through experience (Ibarra, 1999) and therefore needs a safe space to occur (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). However, there is a subtle difference between identity play and identity work because identity play is about exploring oneself without the pressure of claiming and granting leadership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), but identity work requires an individual to tailor their behaviours to a prototype which has largely been promoted through role modelling (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). Indeed, headteachers move through a variety of roles and environments perfecting their craft before becoming headteachers, firstly being teachers, then potentially in charge of middle leadership, for example. Thus, exploring the extent to which identity play and identity work takes place over the course of a headteachers' career trajectory is important when considering how leader identities are constructed.

Furthermore, Ibarra (1999) posits that identity work happens most prominently when individuals transition to new roles and feel the need to transform themselves. As identities are transient and changing, this can lead to gaps in the identity development of an individual at the point of transition which in turn can threaten a person's identity (Murakami & Toernsen, 2017) and lead to uncertainty within the individual. According to Spears (2020), when people are uncertain on what to believe, social influence arises because the uncertainty causes the individual to question their identity and their relation to

a group, an action relating to social identity theory (Tajfel &Turner, 1979) and social identity theory of leadership (Hogg et al., 2001) described next.

2.3.1 Social identity theory

One of the key theories associated with identity development is social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The assumption of social identity theory is that an individual's identity is based on the social group that the person belongs to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Comparisons are then made to help an individual feel more positive about their identity. For example, in the case of women, females might believe that if they behave like men they have more chance of advancement (Eagly & Karau, 2002). When individuals share a social identity, they exhibit behaviours which are underpinned by the beliefs, goals, norms and values of the group. Moreover, the individual acts in accordance with the group, enhancing their sense of trust with the members and together, developing the feeling of belonging. Thus, social identity in the context of leadership would look upon leadership as a process of shared reality and identity, with leaders shaping this reality and determining its nature and trajectory (Reicher et al., 2018).

Through the lens of a female perspective, it has been suggested that females can encounter obstacles when endeavouring to make social change (Fuller, 2017). Social identity theory assumes that a person's identity is rooted in the social group to which they belong and if that social group is viewed negatively, then an unsatisfactory social identity will emerge (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This therefore explains why women might sometimes act as if part of the "old boys club" (Weiner & Burton, 2016, p.341), because they have seen this as enabling their career advancement and strengthening their social identity, moving themselves away from a social identity related to their gender. Yet, paradoxically, there is usually outside consensus that a group exists for an intergroup to identify (Tajfel, 1982).

Social identity theory proposes that in the arena of women in leadership for example, where women often have an unfavourable social identity because their career paths have historically been less successful, an individual can adopt one of three identity management approaches. These three approaches are defined as individual mobility, social competition

and social creativity (Tajfel, 1982). Individual mobility refers to how a person might move psychologically away from a low status group, particularly if the boundaries of the group are impermeable. Social competition happens more often when an individual identifies strongly with a group and feels able to dispute social norms collectively from within the group itself (Scheifele et al., 2019). Social creativity occurs if a group is stable, because it refers to the altering of values associated with the group, emphasising for instance, how the values of the ingroup are more advantageous than those of the outgroup. According to Scheifele et al. (2019), there has been little empirical research into the assumptions of social identity theory in the field of gender and the testing of these three identity management strategies, therefore adding further justification for this research. Research which has been conducted has found evidence to strengthen the concepts of individual mobility and social competition (Breinlinger & Kelly, 1994) and how identifying with one's gender can perpetuate collective action (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995). Interestingly, more recent studies into women in leadership and social identity theory have also shown how female leaders can exhibit so-called "Queen-bee" behaviours (Mavin, 2008, p.75). Such behaviours refer to how female leaders can behave poorly towards other women in an institution, threatening the power of solidarity and collective action.

2.3.2 Social identity theory of leadership

An extension of social identity theory pertinent to this thesis and the concept of identity construction, is Hogg et al.'s (2001) social identity theory of leadership. It is particularly related to social identity theory of a group, otherwise known as self-categorisation or analysis of social influence, which explains group polarisation and why individuals conform (Turner et al., 1989). According to Hogg et al. (2012), individuals attribute social groups to group prototypes with the term 'prototype' being defined as a set of characteristics which bring together similarities within an in-group. After somebody is designated as a group member, the person becomes depersonalised which leads people to see them as members of the group rather than independent individuals. This process is called self-categorisation and it describes the transformation of the person to embody the group prototype. In addition, within these groups, a "norm talk" (Hogg et al., 2012, p.263) pervades.

Furthermore, there is a suggestion from Hogg et al. (2012) that prototypical members of a group can occupy leadership positions within a group and that the more prototypical members take on the norms of the group, the more invested they become in the group and more fairly they treat other group members. A prominent point in social identity theory of leadership is that leaders who are prototypical encourage the value of trust which in turn increases the salience of the group. Indeed, trust plays a key role in helping to resolve social dilemmas and turn individual aims into group objectives which are shared.

However, one of the challenges prototypical leaders have is how they lead different subgroups of people, thus leading in an intergroup way. Hogg et al. (2017) refer to this as a "superordinate identity" (p.573) which celebrates diversity and distinctiveness whilst bringing everybody to the same vision and overall identity. Closely related to this concept, is Brewer's (1991) optimal distinctiveness theory which explains how people strive to achieve two motives which conflict with each other. These are explained as both seeking inclusion or sameness (Hogg et al., 2017), which is in the interests of the group but at the same time seeking uniqueness, which serves to embrace individuality. Thus, leaders try to balance these two competing aims and is an important idea for exploring an educational field where equity appears to be a problem according to the data. Furthermore, the more a group identifies with a certain prototype or identity, the more certain or entitative the group becomes. However, this can then lead to a group that does not have the permeable edges required to embrace diversity.

Social identity theory of leadership is also closely related to uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2001; 2012). Feelings relating to self-uncertainty lead to members of groups wanting to have leadership that is directive, unambiguous and hierarchical, in opposition to the contemporary preference for postheroic leadership (Fletcher, 2004). Typically, individuals who are part of a group want their leaders to define the identity of the group (Rast et al., 2013) and groups which are entitatively high because they have clear goals and internal structures, for example, tend to reduce feelings of uncertainty for individuals. Hence, uncertainty is to be avoided when developing cohesive team leadership and both social and self-categorisation reduces uncertainty to enable leadership to be more effective.

2.4 Values

So far within this literature review, the role of values within a group dynamic has been highlighted and particularly the importance of trust in creating a salient social group. Higham and Booth (2018) suggest that the role values play in driving leadership action has been either "downplayed" or "under-theorised" (p.142) in the extant literature, although Warwas (2014) claims that even though empirical explorations into the values headteachers hold is increasing, there is a dearth of evidence into how these values impact on headteacher behaviours (Warwas, 2014). For leadership to be effective, leaders need to comprehend the motivations of individuals and be cognisant of human nature. Moreover, they should be aware of their own value set and ethical dispositions (Begley, 2006), the values of the community and the school's ethos (Thabit Al-Ani & Saliim Al-Harthi, 2017). Headteachers work in an environment of complex and conflicting values which are communal, societal, global and individual in nature. The headteacher is at the centre of this web of values and is best positioned to act as a mediator of these values (Begley, 1999). Policy makers in education are guided by values to form targets, decisions and actions and to understand these values, leaders must take part in active self-reflection. For the purpose of this current study, values are defined by Kafa and Pashiardis (2020) as "the perceptions, patterns and choices that guide the behaviour of an individual, influencing his/her views, decisions and actions" (p.442). According to Kafa and Pashiardis (2020), a large proportion of the extant international research on school leadership asserts that it is driven by values, with personal values influencing the actions of school principals which relate to relationships, expectations and aspirations. This values-led approach has in turn been seek to increase a person's authenticity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Values can be espoused and therefore core to the individual's behaviours and can even define the individual (Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020). Or, they can be values-in-action which people develop over time and might differ from those which are espoused (Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020). After studying fifty-six German principals to find out how professional values relate to leadership behaviours, Warwas (2014) discovered that values often connect to emotion and affect, whilst providing a social group with a shared discourse to explain, negotiate or justify conduct and behaviour. Hanold (2017) connects values to self-awareness, citing that an individual self-regulates according to the values they identify through self-awareness. Similarly, Ladkin and

Taylor (2010) posit that values need to be enacted congruently through the interrelation of somatic clues and symbolic interactions. When leaders are in tune to their own somatic clues, they show a high degree of self-knowledge which leads to authenticity.

Headteachers in England are currently guided by 'The Headteachers' Standards, 2020' (DfE, 2020) which are a set of values which act as a training framework for new or aspiring headteachers. The ten standards encompass the teachers' standards as well as the expectations of headteachers and cover areas such as school culture, organisational management and working in partnership as well as teaching and curriculum, for example. The document also reinforces the expectation that headteachers have a responsibility to uphold high standards of ethical and professional conduct within the sector. The framework also uses the 'Seven Principles of Public Life' (DfE, 1995), otherwise known as the Nolan principles, which advocate the values of leading schools selflessly, with integrity and accountability, objectivity, openness and honesty. Although these principles might seem outdated according to their published date, they are still valued as shaping the expectations of anybody who works as a public office-holder and were first advocated in a report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life by Lord Nolan (DfE, 1995). Within the published Headteachers' Standards (DfE, 2020), can be seen a strong emphasis on the building of culture and relationships as well as high-quality and ambitious educational provision encompassed in moral integrity.

Researchers of educational leadership regularly seek to fully understand the complexity of leading schools and what shapes a successful school leader. For example, after researching the experiences of ten headteachers (male/female; primary/secondary), Day (2004) discovered that successful leadership was based on values, such as a passion for education, a commitment to the community and a mix of factors such as trust, inclusivity, care, achievement and collaboration. The headteachers in Day's (2004) study were emotionally engaged with all stakeholders, were able to manage tensions, reflected willingly and adapted to change. In another study which focused on twenty headteachers' perceptions of effective leading for improvement, Day et al. (2008) note that an increase in pupil engagement was achieved through making changes to pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, leadership cultures and structures. Day (2014) also researched twelve

headteachers from different countries who worked in challenging schools and found that these participants were incredibly resilient in their roles, both emotionally and on an everyday basis. Notably, Day (2005) cites that sustained educational leadership success is connected to being able to reconcile tensions between vision and external performativity measures, being able to build an inclusive community, narrating a unified sense of self, practising an ethical dimension and activating professional trust, mirroring the Nolan principles so prevalent in the Headteachers Standards (DfE, 2020).

Additionally, the challenges which leaders of education face have been documented by researchers such as Ball (2003) and Fuller (2019). Ball (2003) outlines how the teaching profession has become a culture of "performativity" (p.3). Through the use of this term, Ball (2003) explains how new policies and educational reforms which are externally imposed and often technologically data-driven have impacted negatively on the "soul" (p.4) of the teacher, taking away time for creativity and forming an atmosphere of confused values. After researching responses from ten headteachers in England, Fuller (2019) also refers to an apparent gap between the values espoused by school leaders, educational philosophy, professionalism and the reforms being imposed by external bodies. Hence, there is now a "resistance" (Fuller, 2019, p.6) from headteachers to conform to imposed policy. Ball (2003) describes how performance related targets have negatively affected the social identity of teachers as they are unable to teach autonomously or from their own professional judgement. Arguably, the reforms have led to some teachers feeling alienated from the self (Ball, 2003) and teachers thus struggle with the tensions of doing the best for the children or the best for the performance of the overall institution. Henceforth, it would seem that the role of the headteacher is to manage a dichotomy of values and performativity.

2.5 Gender

Lewis (2014) suggests that it is important to explicate how a woman's femininity has been reconfigured in the contemporary workplace rather than to focus on its exclusion. In fact, more research should be conducted which critically investigates this phenomenon (Lewis, 2014). Indeed, postfeminists seek to critique how females are now included in professions,

which develops understanding of what types of leaders women need to become. Entwined within this objective are discussions and debates on the extent to which gender is an identity in itself, gendered leadership and obstacles to female advancement to leadership. This next part of the chapter will present prominent ideas from these themes.

American professor and feminist theorist, Judith Butler (1990), suggests that traditional feminism should not consider gender or sex as being essential or natural. Rather, she queries the notion of 'woman' being a category, asking who decides what and who the term includes. Butler (1990) also asserts that being female or male is not fixed biologically and instead is created and impacted upon through learned social acts and performances. Thus, gender is perceived as an unstable identity, constructed through repeated action and in a stylised way over time (Butler, 1988). Butler (1990) draws largely on the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1949) who cites that gender and sex are different and therefore, a person becomes female. De Beauvoir (1949) postulates that gender is an identity, which is learnt over time through socialisation and adherence to historical ideas and cultural signs. Thus, de Beauvoir (1949) and Butler (1988) imply that there is a social control over gender, although is sex is biological. As a result, gender as a construct is influenced by speech, actions and dispositions which are repeated in society, paradoxically perpetuating the cycle of issues women can experience.

More recently, sociologist Harriet Bradley (2013), also posits that gender is a social construct too because it is unfixed and varies according to time, place and culture, mirroring the definition of identity for this thesis (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). For Bradley (2013), gender can be seen as a lived experience and not essentialist, with differences in gender able to be transcended. Consequently, Bradley (2013) suggests that gender is a sense-making term used by individuals to categorise the world and as a consequence, a construct which is often deployed politically to highlight dynamics of power between women and men. Bradley (2013) builds on the ideas of Butler (1990) and de Beauvoir (1949) by referring to a proposed social order of gender involving three key concepts of gender inequality which are production, reproduction and consumption, a framework said to be Marxist in nature. Production denotes the inequalities experienced by women in the workplace. Reproduction alludes to how women can still be expected to run the household,

responsible for bearing children. Consumption describes how identity in contemporary society can appear to link to what individuals materialistically need or should have (Bradley, 2013).

Another key theory in female leadership comes from the research from Eagly and Karau (2002). Although notably their work stems from research in the business context, it nevertheless provides insight into some of the barriers women might face when becoming a leader. Eagly and Karau (2002) state that leadership experiences a gender gap due to the synergy between leaders who lead in a stereotypical male way, such as being agentic and instrumental, as opposed to leaders who lead in a stereotypical female way, which is to be more expressive and communal. This suggests that people might look more favourably on male leaders and moreover, that women potentially come up against a glass ceiling more than men because they struggle more than their male counterparts to claim authority. One of the reasons for this proposed by Eagly and Karau (2002), is that women typically do not self-promote or claim leadership. Plus, women can also experience a glass cliff, which happens when women are appointed to leadership posts which have an increase in risk or failure due to being in a crisis, implying that women are often set up to fail (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). In this case, the woman would be catapulted to the top and not be prototypical of the group, henceforth not have the support of her group. Indeed, Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory explains how women can experience a "double bind" (Weiner & Burton, 2016, p.340), because if they act like stereotypical male leaders they can be criticised and if they choose not to act like them, this approach can be criticised too. It can also lead to female leaders feeling inauthentic, which in turn can lead to females displaying signs of how they are feeling uncomfortable with their identity (Eagly, 2005).

Interestingly, some of the literature suggests that previous attempts to fill the pipeline with women who might advance to leadership have not worked because initiatives have still been based on assumptions of leadership which are male-normed (Longman et al., 2019, p.56) and work in this area identifies that there are still some extant but subtle barriers, or second-generation bias, for females wishing to move into leadership (Ibarra et al., 2013). These barriers can be connected to how people interact with one another resulting in women struggling to see themselves as the leader or to be affirmed by others as the leader

(Ibarra et al., 2013). Fuller (2013) too, states that women in educational leadership in England can be impacted negatively by several factors which are stereotypical, cultural, societal and even discriminatory in nature. Thus, it would seem that women aspiring to leadership might need to overcome barriers which are a complex web of engrained structural, societal and personal factors or attitudes.

Indeed, much of the research on leadership and gender points to the plethora of barriers which stand in the way of women aspiring to be leaders. It is welcomed that leadership literature now presents new insight into what influences a woman to aspire to be a leader which looks at what encourages, discourages and motivates women into leadership (Longman et al., 2019). It is has been suggested (Eckman, 2004) that women will have a different career trajectory than their male counterparts and that there is also an existing hierarchy in education, which is systemic and inequitable even above the role of headship. This issue can lead to a potential void of the female voice from the very top leadership level. Within the field of leadership, the path to the top is traditionally seen as linear which does not necessarily align to women's life experiences. Furthermore, females often see career success as connecting to job satisfaction or inner growth and quality of life (Mavin, 2001). Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) postulate that women respond effectively to a kaleidescope approach when developing their careers, which encompasses balance, challenge and authenticity within a relational cadre. Women can be impacted by engrained stereotypical and cultural attitudes in society about how women should look after the family which in turn can negatively affect the identities of women and how they see themselves (Evetts, 2000) although it has also been proposed that women are not as likely to leave their careers if there is a strong connection between their professional identity and social groups (Volpe & Murphy, 2011).

2.5.1 Leadership and female secondary school headteachers

Given that there is a tension between the number of women working in education and those who are secondary school headteachers, it is important to explore in more detail some of the research on why this might be from a gendered perspective, focusing

specifically on the secondary school phase, particularly because Fuller (2013) cites “there is relatively little writing on women secondary school headteachers in England” (p.24). Apparent limitations stemming from the extant research in the field, are that many focus on the deputy headteacher level, rather than headteachers themselves, or, the research has been pursued outside of England.

Exploring the phenomenon from an international perspective and through a female lens, Oplatka and Tamir (2009) conducted a study of twenty-five female deputy headteachers working in secondary schools in Israel who were not aspiring to be headteachers. In their study, they detail how female headteachers either wait until they are approached and encouraged to apply for headship or aspire to do the job from an early stage in their career. Oplatka and Tamir (2009) outline several factors as to why females might not become headteachers. For example, there may be existent discrimination, male dominance in interview teams, lack of female role models. Plus, women may see a tension in the way they want to lead and how the leadership of the role is perceived. Interestingly, the women in this study saw headship as all-consuming, alienating and not compatible with a female deputy’s life and personality. They thought that if they were to become headteachers, they would not be so fulfilled and become occupied with administrative tasks, potentially even suffering health-wise.

Continuing the global perspective, in their study on nine aspiring principals in a principal preparation programme in America, Weiner and Burton (2016) suggest that labelling teaching as a profession for women can be detrimental to female advancement in the sector, because women begin to enact and normalise the idea of the female being caring, or administratively adept. Weiner and Burton (2016) also suggest that school leadership teams exist as “old boys clubs” (p.341) with white males being seen as having leadership potential, echoing findings from studies of female leaders in the business sector from Roberts and Brown (2019). Weiner and Burton (2016) discovered that work-life balance was salient for the females in the study and that the women also experienced a double bind during interview processes because they received feedback which they perceived to be gendered. Generally too, the participants in Weiner and Burton’s study (2016) felt that they were taken less seriously than their male counterparts. Moreover, the female principals in this

research describe how they were told to downplay characteristics such as warmth and emotion to portray a more neutralised demeanour. In turn, these perceptions appeared to lead to a dissonance which males did not display.

Within the United Kingdom, Bruce-Golding (2019) studied the career paths of male and female secondary phase assistant and deputy headteachers in Birmingham in England. Of further justification for this current study, Bruce-Golding (2019) states that in 2016, more than 40,000 teachers left the sector (DfE, 2017) and that being a headteacher does not appear to be a desired choice for assistant and deputy headteachers any more. Bruce-Golding (2019) concludes that social capital plays a prominent part in why senior educational leaders might not take the next step to headship and characterises the participants in her study as either "Bonders, Bridgers or Leavers" (p.59). Bonders are senior leaders who have worked autonomously in their roles and feel their headteacher leader has expressed trust in their abilities, hence their social capital is engrained in a trusting and reciprocated social group. However, they enjoy this level of freedom and do not want to undergo the pressures they can see their headteacher endure, seeing it as a position with high accountability but low freedom. Bridgers are senior leaders who imagine themselves in the role and aspire to do it. They have close working relationships with the headteacher and see the role as being manageable for them. With regards to social capital, Bridgers are able to connect to many different social groups. The Leavers demonstrate that they have mastery in their role, yet experience an element of dissatisfaction with where they are, choosing to focus more on personal relationships and family. The study gives valuable insight into reasons for not taking the leap to headship and perceptions of headteachers but did not explore the experiences of the headteachers themselves.

Guihen (2017) also looked into the perceptions of secondary school deputy headteachers on headship. Her study focused on twelve female deputy headteachers and found that the women held contradictory pictures of the role of headship. Some of the participants thought it was an opportunity to transform lives while others felt it was a role encapsulated by high stakes performativity and risk. Interestingly, Guihen's (2017) article highlights that if the role of headship is portrayed as being one of chance to change children's lives for the better based on values, than it was perceived to be a more attractive leadership position to

the women in her study. The participants in Guihen's research (2017) saw headship as a precarious position and less stable than deputy headship because the pressures of working in an educational culture which is constantly changing did not appeal because they would need to continually deal with new problems. However, eight participants in this sample did want to become headteachers and were wanting to work in an organisation that was tolerant of risk and altruistic in nature.

Within the extant literature, there are examples of how researchers have used life history approaches to explore the career experiences of female secondary school headteachers. For example, Smith (2011) conducted a life history study of forty female secondary school teachers, ten of which were female headteachers. The aim of the study was to explore factors impacting on women's career decisions to provide further insight into why women are under-represented in secondary headteacher positions in the United Kingdom. The study evidenced that female teachers held negative perceptions of headship, whereas the female headteachers themselves were positive about the role, seeing it as an opportunity to enact change. In response to the outcomes of the study, Smith (2011) posits that presenting a positive perspective of the role, one which is seen to have agency and driven by values might influence female teachers to consider the role in the future. Interestingly, within the study, only two out of thirty female teachers said they would like to do the role in the future. Smith (2011) unearthed that the key elements of a female headteacher's leadership were namely: putting the pupil first, being seen to be tough but to care, being adaptable with regards to leadership style, having positive relationships, acting emotionally rational, creating support networks, enjoying change and challenge and having strategies to help with the work-life balance. However, the perceptions of the majority of the female teachers in the study mirrored those from Oplatka and Tamir (2009) which are that being a headteacher could be lonely, with the work being seen to be uninspiring and not pupil-focused and even those women in middle leadership positions who had positive experiences of leadership, did not wish to advance to headship.

McKillop and Moorosi (2017) examined experiences regarding career development through semi-structured interviews based on a life story approach from a mixed sample of primary and secondary female headteachers in England. Their study explored women's career

development to headship against a three stage model based on the work of Gronn (1999). The first stage is entitled “formation” (p.337) and refers to a beginning stage whereby the individual forms a self-concept through working with different social groups (McKillop & Moorosi, 2017). Notably, the findings from their study indicated that formative values played a key part in in shaping a future moral integrity and leadership approach of wanting to impact positively on social justice. The second stage is called “accession” (p.338) in which women make the decision to work in education and gain essential skills and knowledge for the role of a headteacher and promotion to the post (McKillop & Moorosi, 2017). Interestingly, the majority of the women in their study did not set out to be headteachers and only considered the role after taking on positions of leadership early in their careers. Additionally, the support of their colleagues was paramount, as well as the positive impact of encouragement from their headteacher in applying for the role of headteacher. The final stage is known as “incumbency” (p.338) and occurs when the woman takes on the role of headship. It is a stage that can happen every time the female moves to a new headteacher role. At the start of the stage, the woman becomes acquainted with the school culture and expectations, socialisation within the school environment occurs and confidence builds. The participants in McKillop and Moorosi’s (2017) study highlighted how the initial stages of headship were difficult, despite having completed NPQH programmes, for example. One recommendation from their study, was that to increase career advancement, women should be exposed to leadership opportunities at the nascent part of their professional trajectories.

In addition, Cliffe (2016) completed two studies on female secondary school headteachers in England. The first used life history interviews to explore career paths whereas the second study was more longitudinal looking at emotional intelligence through life history interviews and psychometric tests. Cliffe’s (2016) findings showed that emotional turning points influenced her participants’ trajectories to educational senior leadership. Within the interviews, the interviewees recalled turning points whereby they remembered how they reacted and then subsequently reflected on a specific situation so that they acted differently the next time. The result of Cliffe’s (2016) research was a spiral model that represented the intertwining of life experience, the life journey and the use of emotions, starting with the self through to leadership.

2.6 Leadership identity development

Moorosi (2020) explains that leadership identity refers to the degree to which individuals see themselves as leaders whilst leader identity development relates to the process of how an individual learns to comprehend and describe themselves as a leader. This study considers both concepts to be important when exploring the phenomenon and thus both terms are employed throughout the thesis. To add further justification for this research, Blose (2022) asserts that the research on leader identity is still in its nascent period and that more research is needed to fully understand the connection between the professional and personal identities of school leaders. Kempster (2006) claims that leadership eventually becomes salient as a social identity and even becomes part of the leader's personal identity when there is a strong sense of belonging and legitimate participation in an organisation. This part of the literature review will explore key ideas on how leadership identities are developed before moving into a discussion on developing leader identities through lived experience.

One key idea on how leadership identity is developed comes from DeRue and Ashford (2010), for example. DeRue and Ashford (2010) propose a leadership identity model which is built on three differing layers namely: personal identity, relational identity and collective identity. According to DeRue and Ashford (2010), a personal identity has attributes which are embedded in particular contextual situations where identity needs to be asserted. Relational identity is a key part of constructing a leadership identity as it is based on a reciprocal relationship, affirmed by both the followers and the leader. A collective identity is when the leader can identify with a wider social group so for example, in the context of the participants of this study, within secondary school education (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). DeRue and Ashford (2010) also propose that leadership identity is a co-construction from social interaction within an organisation and takes place through a developing claim and grant process. This process happens because individuals take on either a leader or follower identity and reciprocate and collectively endorse these two identities. This dynamic approach to leadership identity development highlights how leader and follower identities can shift across different situations and over time. This is particularly important for this

study on the leadership of headteachers due to the many groups of people that they lead and interact with.

Indeed, scholars such as DeRue and Ashford (2010) view leadership as a broader concept which is less hierarchical and diffused within the people of an organisation. Particularly relevant for this study, DeRue and Ashford (2010) see leadership identity development as a process which aligns to the already discussed "identity work" (p.629), with identity work operating in three ways, through internalising the identity of a leader into one's own self-concept, recognising that others view oneself as the leader and finally the identity is endorsed collectively within an institution. Thus, emphasising how leadership identity is not only about one's one view of the self as the leader but also about affirmation and validation from others and also the organisation as an abstract concept.

Brue and Brue (2018) analysed Women's Only Leadership Development training in America to discover more about the conceptualisation and implementation of leadership roles and also how leadership identities are constructed and maintained. Brue and Brue (2018) found that validation of knowing one's own strengths and seeing from role models how to do leadership was paramount. The participants in their study went through a three step process of developing, testing and then adjusting the leadership self they most preferred. Validation of their leadership from mentors acted as a catalyst to internalisation of an identity and identity was identified as having strong connections to the social group and a subsequent feeling of belonging. Feeling that they belonged meant that these women could share thoughts and struggles and the desire to connect to other women seemed to be an aspect of their leadership identity development, important to consider in relation to extant Queen-bee behaviours (Mavin, 2008). Furthermore, leadership identity was found to be shaped by knowing oneself in addition to realising that one is making a difference in the role (Brue & Brue, 2018). It also became apparent that becoming a leader took time and was strategically developed through a process of self-identification of weaknesses, strengths, problem-solving and managing group dynamics. Thus, developing a new leadership identity is about how an individual views themself in a new paradigm, rather than conforming to a prescribed model. It involves attaining leadership skills and building a novel narrative of leadership. Karp and Helgo (2008) claim that if emerging leaders do not engage in the

process of self-discovery, they will not be authentic leaders and unable to adapt to the different challenges leadership brings. Consequently, the female leaders in Brue and Brue's (2018) study appeared to value their personal way of leading as opposed to following the same way as others. Hence, the process of leadership development is reflexive and reflective with leaders defining their own leadership philosophy and way of being.

2.6.1 Leadership identity development through lived experience

Given that this study focuses on the development of leadership identity by examining career trajectories, what the extant literature says about leadership identity development through lived experience is important to explain. Providing further justification for this study, Kempster (2006) notes that there is limited attention in the extant literature on how individuals learn to become leaders through observational learning, with Day (2000) citing that there is a lack of research on leadership development which is contextual, even though much has been written about leadership development from a qualitative perspective (Kempster, 2006). It is suggested that the dearth of qualitative and specific research in this area is due to the identification of how to develop tacit knowledge about how leadership has been learnt and subsequently impacted on identity construction. Anderson and Boocock (2002) cite that tacit knowledge is transmitted through training which is either ad hoc or hands-on. Closely related, Cope and Watts (2000) assert that critical incidents can also act as vital triggers for learning at a higher level with these interactions occurring in connection with other people and evoking feelings of emotion. Therefore, times of pressure or crisis can transform learning and also encourage the individual to create their own personal theories from these learning episodes (Rae & Carswell, 2001). Thus, leadership learning through lived experience offers opportunities to learn from observation, the situation, interaction with others and reflection.

One of the main theories of learning through lived experience comes from Kempster (2006) and his "metaphor of apprenticeship" (p.4) which can explain how leadership can be developed over time through influences which are causal and contextual. Kempster (2006) researched six leaders of multi-national companies in the United Kingdom through interviews and then followed-up these interviews with a further study involving thirty-five

senior leaders. Kempster's (2006) study focused on the lived experiences of its participants, looking for causes impacting on leadership on a deeper level. From the data, Kempster (2006) identified three key findings common to all the participants which were namely: that the level of influence from organised leadership interventions on their formal development as leaders was low, the influence from notable people on their leadership learning was dominant and that the research interview process itself enabled the participants to realise how influences had shaped their leadership development. Thus, the interviews had acted as a catalyst to the directors in the study so they could pinpoint where the influences had been. Furthermore, four antecedents of leadership manifestation were highlighted which were the impact that notable people and critical episodes have on a growing leader, the journey of becoming a leader and the development of the self as a leader, the interaction between agency and structure and also the prominence of situated learning and how learning to lead is a form of participative apprenticeship. On the topic of becoming a leader, the participants in this study identified strongly with the concept of leadership at an early stage of their professional paths and they recognised leadership characteristics and actions in role models around them (Kempster, 2006). Notably, these notable people represented a framework of social structures which preceded them, structures which influenced views on perspectives of salient leadership. The notion of learning about leadership through daily interaction with people around them was less explicit to the participants in Kempster's (2006) study although looking back, the participants were able to see how these interactions had been legitimate. Moreover, the participants were aware they had changed after interaction with others but not what those changes explicitly were. It therefore appeared from Kempster's (2006) study, that leaders emerged because they were able to act in a manner which was contextually appropriate and affirmed by members of the relevant community.

The findings also illuminated a new way of thinking about how leaders learn about leadership through lived experience in the form of an apprenticeship of "becoming" (Kempster, 2006, p.13) through "situated learning" (Kempster, 2006, p.15). The concept of situated learning stems from Lave and Wenger (1991) who argue that being an active and engaged participant in the social world is about "becoming" part of this world rather than "knowing" about it (Kempster, 2006, p.6). Situated learning also develops the

aforementioned acquirement of tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000) and Schoen's (1983) knowledge-in-action because the participant is learning by being exposed to a plethora of social situations, activities and people. This conceptualisation also echoes ideas from Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle because it operates in a continual cyclical motion. It also mirrors those from Schoen (1983), because the framework incorporates implicit reflection based on explicit learning episodes. In Kempster's (2006) model of leadership learning as lived experience, lived experience therefore takes precedence over formal developmental opportunities and emphasises the situation of the organisation. The situation is important because not only does it form the actors within it but it is also formed by those actors. Therefore, the structure-agency relationship of leadership learning, or constant activity between structures in the social world, is continual. In particular, the influence of notable people and critical episodes continues, sustaining the lived experience of the leadership being learnt. Kempster (2006) suggests, that the more diverse the notable people are, the richer the skills in leadership, potentially significant for this study where there is a lack of diversity at the top of the profession.

The place of role modelling in leadership identity development through lived experience is also pertinent to this study. How a person learns to behave can be explained by Bandura's (1977) social learning theory which gives reason as to why people seek guidance from role models when learning, as well as from observation and imitation. Bandura (1977) asserts that in society, individuals pay attention to certain types of behaviour and then encode these behaviours and attitudes. This happens via a cognitive process, therefore proposing that there is thought before imitation. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory is thus viewed as a staged process and demonstrates how individuals learn from each other through the social and cultural structures which exist in the world. The first stage describes how a learner is drawn by a particular behaviour and therefore pays attention to it. The second stage refers to how the behaviour is remembered and thus able to be imitated. The third stage describes how successfully an individual can enact that behaviour and the final stage refers to how motivated the person is to perform the act. If behaviours are positively reinforced, they are more likely to be copied. Social learning learning was then adapted by Bandura to social cognitive theory (1986), to better explain how human beings learn from our social context, being both influenced and influencers.

Indeed, the role of others in leadership identity development and how they serve as positive role models has been widely written about since Bandura (1977; 1986). Gibson (2004), for instance, describes a role model as cognitively constructed according to the attributes of social actors. Therefore, a role model is somebody who the individual sees similar to oneself in some way and then subsequently wishes to emulate their attributes (Gibson, 2004). Similarly, Weaver et al. (2005) describe role modelling as a process involving the identification of somebody a person can look up to. Building on the definition, Gibson (2004) also provides a differentiation between role modelling and mentoring, explaining that acting as a role model does not require the close relationship needed between a mentor and an observer. Furthermore, many people can act as role models and they can come from all areas of society, the mentor is not necessarily the role model. Plus, that role models can aid the learning of novel tasks and help an individual to visualise their possible self.

2.6.2 Models of leadership identity development

It is clear from the literature review so far that there are several studies which have explored the career experiences of female secondary school headteachers through a life history approach (Smith, 2011; Cliffe, 2016). Scholars have also researched women's leadership development both nationally and internationally (Weiner & Burton, 2016; McKillop & Moorosi, 2017; Brue & Brue, 2018). However, there appears to be a lack of empirical studies on how female secondary school headteachers develop their leader identities over the course of their career. This section will outline some of the available models which lend themselves to providing a framework to examining leadership identity development explicitly over a career span within the field of education. However, it seems from a review of the literature that models to explore educational leadership identity development have taken place more frequently with students, rather than adults, internationally, rather than nationally and also through focusing on leadership development programmes.

One such model comes from Komives et al. (2005) entitled the Leadership Identity Development Model (LIDM). The model originally stemmed from a grounded theory and life narrative methodology (Komives et al., 2005) focusing on developing a leadership identity which unveiled how thirteen diverse American college students moved through six stages from seeing leadership identity as leader-centric, to a process which is relational and collaborative. How leadership identity develops was found to be linked to five categories associated with influence, the self and a widening of perceptions on leadership. Furthermore, within the model, there are transitions within each stage which mark a change in the developing leader's thought processes and demonstrate how the leader is finishing one stage and moving to the next. Within each of the six stages, the individual is seen to engage with the group around them and this reciprocity develops the leader.

Initially, in the LIDM (Komives et al., 2005), leaders are viewed by the individual as parents, super heroes or national public leaders and the person does not view themselves as a leader, rather sees leadership as a phenomenon outside of the self. The individual then takes on leadership roles which can be varied and unfocused, trying out lots of leadership roles at the same time whilst actively observing the leaders and people around them. Thirdly, the developing leader will become more leader-centric (Komives et al., 2005, p.606) occupying a position as a leader and taking on responsibilities for a group or groups. The individual begins to notice that other people within a group can become a leader and that leadership happens around them. As the developing leader moves towards stage five, the individual becomes more committed to a larger sense of purpose, connecting more intensely with their values, beliefs and passions and becoming more independent in their leadership thinking. Finally, in stage six, the leader becomes more confident and engages daily with their leadership identity.

One study which has used the LIDM in its research was conducted by Hall (2015), who through the topic of collegiate recreation and athletics, explored how professionals lead students through the LIDM. Although not contextually within the field of secondary phase educational leadership and still with students, Hall's study (2015) does give useful insight into how models such as the LIDM can be applied by professionals in order to inform practice and daily leadership work. Although talking about professionals and students,

rather than teachers and headteachers, Hall (2015) states that it can be helpful for the professional to know what stage of the LIDM the student is in and can discover this through giving time to hear about the student's past leadership experiences and current leadership understanding, sharing an approach similar to Kempster (2006). Interestingly, Hall (2015) also cites that it can be helpful to ask the student to do this through the medium of pictures. Furthermore, Hall (2015) explains that professionals are advised to teach their students leadership language and that through using a model such as the LIDM, a student can better understand their own leadership development and express this understanding more coherently. Moreover, the power of reflection is also a key theme for Hall (2015). Hall (2015) posits that professionals should create opportunity for leadership reflection which in turn will help to aid development of leadership skills. These opportunities could come in the form of journals, blogs or written logs.

Again with student participants and with the stance that leader identity development should be studied longitudinally, Miscenko et al. (2017) tracked the development of leader identity over a period of seven weeks with postgraduates from a Dutch business school on a leader development programme, focusing on the link between improved leadership skills and strengthened concept of the self as a leader. Miscenko et al.'s study (2017) proposes that engaging with interpersonal leadership skills enhances the individual's perception of the self as a leader. Significantly, Miscenko et al. (2017) cite "we cannot know who we are until we see what we do" (p.606).

Additionally, Miscenko et al. (2017) discovered that leader development programmes can be effective in transforming leader identities and enable a leader to revise their identity as a leader in a spiral fashion. In this manner, leaders enact their leadership skills, reflect on the confirmation of their leadership claim and then realign their skills, leading to a stronger self-perception of the leader identity. Further, Miscenko et al. (2017) posit that more research is needed on leader identity development and how it connects to leadership skill development over time.

Another example comes from Moorosi (2010), who longitudinally explored the construction of identity with male and female school leaders in South Africa who were attending a

leadership development programme. Interestingly, Moorosi (2010) found that the less-privileged leaders in her study transformed the most through the process and that all the leaders were more able to reflect on how they had developed their confidence at the end of the programme, highlighting how individuals construct their identities through reflection. Moreover, that when leaders are experts in their identities, then their leadership knowledge and skills are more intrinsically linked to the self-concept. Furthermore, that an intersection of identities such as gender, race or class, background and context influenced leadership development. The outcomes of Moorosi's study (2010) highlight how increasing research on how leaders construct their identity could be used to inform leader development programmes in a more meaningful way.

2.7 Contribution and limitations of prior research

In summary, this chapter has presented deeper knowledge of the theoretical and conceptual framework of this thesis through outlining key points from a literature review of relevant sources regarding the overlapping concepts of leadership, identity, values and gender in an educational context. Key theories related to this conceptual framework have been presented such as social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1877), social identity theory of leadership (Hogg et al., 2001) along with leadership learning through lived experience (Bandura, 1977; 1986; Kempster, 2006). Models of leadership identity development in the field of education have also been highlighted, either for secondary school headteachers (Blose, 2022) or from student leadership (Komives et al., 2005).

Further justification for the study has been given because it has been cited by researchers that not enough is known about female secondary school headteachers (Fuller, 2017) or leadership learning from lived experience (Kempster, 2006). Although there is extant research on what might be discouraging women to not apply for the top role and what factors might impact negatively on a female leader's identity development, most of this research has been conducted in different contexts, such as with deputy headteachers, mixed gender samples, the business sector, primary or Higher Education educational phases or globally, rather than on a local level. Moreover, models which explicitly explore

leadership identity development over time appear to have been used more frequently with students rather than adult leaders. Studies which marry leadership identity development and female secondary school headteachers in England over a career life span appear to be minimal. With the number of female secondary school headteachers not yet matching the number of male, despite being a female-dominated field, and the threat of fewer females entering the profession adding to the risk of even fewer females in the role, from a postfeminist perspective, it is vital that more studies are undertaken which examine what supported women currently in the role to overcome the barriers explained in the literature review.

This review of the extant literature has highlighted that there is a lack of research on how professional lived experiences over time have shaped the leadership identities of female secondary school headteachers specifically. According to scholars, there are tensions which exist in identity development for women, because they face obstacles to advancement due to their social group sitting outside a social norm of male headteachers (Murakami & Toernsen, 2017). Thus, the researcher of this study is interested in discovering the extent to which female secondary school headteachers in the role have been influenced by notable people, critical episodes, observation, situated learning (Kempster, 2006), role models (Gibbs, 2004) and a constellation of people, to construct a salient leader identity over time. Hence the first research sub-question is:

1. What are the professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher?

Another key concept for this study stems from the researcher's own personal experiences of identity incongruence as a female leader and the literature review has shown that a salient leader identity can aid leadership effectiveness. Further, that a leadership identity needs continual identity work, developing over time, although how this happens in practice for female secondary school headteachers is not fully known. Hence the second research sub-question will be:

2. How do the participants construct their leadership identity?

Values were presented as a prominent part of the leadership philosophy of headteachers (Day, 2004; DfE, 2020), as well as the tensions between leading with values and meeting the external demands of policy reform (Ball, 2003; Fuller, 2019). Arguably, this suggests that leading with values and leading for performativity could be a potential reason as to why women may not aspire to being headteachers, particularly because women often wish to lead with purpose, authenticity and value (Ibarra et al., 2013). As a consequence, the third research sub-question will investigate how values shape the leadership identities of the women:

3. How do values shape their leadership identity?

Following the review of the extant literature regarding gender, it would seem that there are many barriers facing aspiring female leaders which can be societal, organisational, personal, attitudinal, cultural or stereotypical in nature (Fuller, 2013; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Furthermore, the way in which women lead can often still be seen as contradictory to what is expected, so affirmation and validation needed in leadership identity development is more difficult (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Although within the field of secondary education, much has been done to explore the phenomenon both internationally and nationally, much of the research explores the perspectives of non-aspirant headteachers, deputy headteachers, mixed-gender samples, primary or higher education phases, rather than existing headteachers and women as a group. As a result, the fourth and final research sub-question is:

4. How have the gendered lived experiences of the participants influenced their developing leadership identity?

2.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has reviewed the extant literature on the four overlapping concepts of leadership, identity, values and gender. Furthermore, it has presented key theories underpinning the study such as social identity theory and social identity theory of

leadership. International and national studies on female secondary school headteachers have been discussed, particularly those which have employed a life history approach as a methodology. Leadership development through lived experience, predominantly the work of Kempster (2006), has been brought to the fore, as well as models used in the field to investigate leader identity development. Finally, the chapter explained the rational for the four research sub-questions which link to the knowledge gaps the study seeks to fill and will provide a response to the main overarching research question of this thesis.

The following chapter explains the methodology for the study and provides justification for the choice of data instruments as well as the research paradigm. It will also provide the participant information, details of the data analysis and how trustworthiness was achieved.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the chapter

This thesis explores the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers in England to find out what has influenced the development of their leadership identities over time. This chapter comprises of eleven sections and explains the philosophical positioning of the research undertaken. The chapter first examines the research paradigm ontologically and epistemologically, justifying the choice of methodology and the rationale for the research methods used. Details on the participants and their differing contexts are then explained, followed by how the data were collected. Next, the trustworthiness of the research is considered along with the ethical implications of this thesis, including the positionality of the researcher. The chapter then provides insight into the limitations of the research design and finally, summarises the key points of the chapter, introducing chapter four and the four findings chapters.

3.2 Paradigm design and rationale

The objective of this study is to explore the professional lived experiences of the individual participants and therefore needed to be underpinned by a paradigm design that sought to uncover insight into human actions and realities. The term paradigm refers to how a social reality is comprehended (Cohen et al., 2011), with positivist approaches seeking a fixed and stable reality and interpretivist approaches investigating a reality which is socially constructed through actions and beliefs.

3.2.1 Ontological approach

Ontologically, a positivist position was rejected by the researcher due to its focus on objectivity and its intention to define life in measurable or scientific terms (Cohen et al.,

2011). In a positivist study, data would be gathered quantitively through experiments or measurements with the aim of testing a hypothesis (Neuman, 2014) but would not take the complexities of humans into account. Rather, this study sets out with an expectation that life is messy and that the world is inhabited by humans who construct their lives through the experiences they encounter (Creswell, 2013). Consequently, a more flexible, interpretive and qualitative approach was desired which was more suited to a study which invited open and exploratory responses from its participants to achieve deep description and understanding of what motivates its participants (Thomas, 2007).

An interpretivist approach does not assume that people are passive, rather it embraces the richness of life and everything the human psyche brings to the world, assuming that context will influence experience (Creswell, 2013). As a result, this study embodies an interpretive paradigm and the depth of the research evolves from attempting to understand the person from within, accepting that there will be many theories which connect to these participants and that there will not be one universal theory or truth for all to follow (Cohen et al., 2011). However, an interpretive paradigm is not faultless. Although suitable for the aims of this study, there is a view that anti-positivists have gone too far in eradicating scientific procedures in order to find the truth and that an interpretive stance is limited in its ability to present knowledge which is based on reliable data (Plowright, 2011). Consequently, the methodological approach used seeks to ensure maximum trustworthiness, confirmability, dependability, transferability and credibility (Nowell et al., 2017), particularly as the researcher is positioned in the field. Further, this study does not claim to be generalisable but rather to provide a lens to examine the phenomenon. Thus, it is acknowledged by the researcher that the data could therefore be open to interpretation (May, 2011). Certainly, the researcher's positionality in the sector should also be considered as an influence on the interpretation of the collated data (Robson, 2011), an aspect debated in more detail in the later section on ethics and reflexivity.

3.2.2 Epistemological approach

Epistemologically, this study also adopts a social constructionist perspective because it propounds that cultural and historical experiences, as well as relationships known to the

individual, socially construct lived experience (Flood, 2010). Social constructionism is subtly different to constructivism, with some scholars advocating it is the same concept (Bryman, 2012), or subsumed within the term "constructivism" (Young & Collin, 2004, p.373). Constructivism is the forerunner to social constructionism and was coined by psychologists such as Piaget (1969), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1990) to explain how an individual constructs their view of the world through processes which are cognitive. Social constructionism has a more social focus, rather than individual, with social processes constructing knowledge through working in tandem with social action (Young & Collin, 2004). Furthermore, social constructionists typically do research which encourages narratives, positive visioning and community building (Gergen, 2001), matching a thesis which provides insight into gendered professional lived experiences of success stories.

As with the ontological approach, the researcher considered both social constructionism and constructivism in deciding the epistemological stance of this study, deciding that social constructionism was more aligned to its ethos. Indeed, all the participants in this study will be working in diverse cultural environments and the social constructs may be so embedded that they feel natural even though they may be an invention of a given society. A social constructionist researcher will situate themselves within the work itself, employing questions which are open-ended and establish a closer working relationship with the participant. Language is also important in social constructionism (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002) and its worldview will focus on making change for marginalised groups.

3.3 Methodological approach

Given that this study falls within an interpretivist and social constructionist paradigm, qualitative data expressed in language was therefore desired. Researchers who use a qualitative stance tend to gather several different forms of data, rather than relying solely on one form of data collation (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers also typically construct their themes, codes or patterns in the data inductively from the "bottom-up" (p.38) and then move forwards and backwards between the themes to ensure they are as comprehensive as possible (Creswell, 2007).

Creswell (2007) recommends that one of five approaches to qualitative inquiry are adopted, which are: case study, ethnography, narrative research, grounded theory and phenomenology. Case studies are recommended when the researcher wishes to demonstrate deeper understanding or a comparison of the cases, often used in the fields of law, medicine or psychology (Creswell, 2007). An ethnographic approach is often used in the discipline of sociology or anthropology and is useful in the interpretation of shared patterns of behaviour within a culture or group after an extended period of time in the field. Drawn from the field of humanities, narrative research is a suitable way to explore an individual's life and stories of personal experience in order to analyse data to find themes. The approach can also be used in the study of one or more people (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory stems from a sociological background and studies processes and actions which involve several people looking to ground a theory in the research area, typically with a sample size between 20-60 individuals (Creswell, 2007). Finally, phenomenology looks to explain the heart of the experience and originates from the field of education, philosophy and psychology. Phenomenology is often used in the study of several people who share an experience (Creswell, 2007) and when collating data through a phenomenological approach, interviews, documents and even art might be employed.

The researcher considered these five approaches of inquiry at the outset of this thesis. Originally, the researcher envisaged that the findings would be presented as case studies (Appendix A), although as the data analysis unfolded and themes were brought together from across the interviews which were narrative in nature, a narrative approach seemed more suitable for this study (Cohen et al., 2011). An ethnographic approach was also considered, but dismissed because it would not have given scope to find out about the past experiences and leader identity development over time. An ethnographical approach could also have potentially needed more time outside of the time parameters permitted for this thesis and was thus more suited to a more longitudinal study. Grounded theory was dismissed too, due to the proposed sample size of the participants in the literature (Creswell, 2007) and also because the objective of this research was to explore the perspectives of the individuals in an inductive manner, not the interactions between them. As a consequence, the researcher decided to adopt a narrative research approach because this study aims to re-story common themes using a chronology. Connelly and Clandinin

(1990) add further weight to this decision, citing that education and research in the educational field are based on the constant construction of stories which are social and personal. Although a phenomenological approach might have appeared appropriate, this study does not aim to find out the participant's views of a phenomena.

Interest in using narrative in qualitative research has recently greatly increased and in particular, it has been proposed that when respondents present accounts of their lives through a narrative approach, this can reduce potential power imbalance between the researcher and their participants (Elliott, 2022). Narrative analysis explores sequences and consequences which are portrayed in storied form and which are then interpreted for a specific audience, often from marginalised groups (Riessman, 2005). Riessman (2005) suggests that thematic analysis suits analysis of narratives because it focuses on what is being said more than how. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) argue that the most effective questions to elicit narratives invite the interviewee to speak about particular situations or times.

3.4 Research methods

Due to its methodological focus on narrative analysis, the researcher decided to use narrative interviews (Burr, 2015) to elicit detail about the women's career trajectories. The purpose of narrative interviews is to put the interviewees at the centre of the study in order to develop a richer understanding of what people experience and how and why they behave (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). These types of interviews give context, coherence and meaning to events. Narrative interviews can also help to prioritise the participants' stories and can be carried out in a semi-structured, unstructured or structured format. Typically though, narrative interviews have an unfixed agenda and give control of the content of what is said to the interviewee, beginning with an open question which invites and encourages the participant to describe their story with the interviewer refraining from interrupting. Within narrative interviews, there is often then a questioning phase whereby the interviewer asks for further detail. A limitation of narrative interviews is that some participants can experience discomfort in telling their story in this manner rather than

through a sequence of questions (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Furthermore, as some individuals might be able to tell their stories with more ease than others (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), the interviewees in this current study were asked to do a pre-task of drawing a River of Life (Butler-Kisber, 2018) to bring to the interview. Visual and unusual reflective tools can reduce the intrusive presence of the researcher and gain a more nuanced understanding of the lives of others (Burnard, 2012).

3.4.1 The River of Life

The concept of a River of Life originates from "critical incident charting" (Burnard, 2012, p.169) and developed into the idea of "career-rivers" (Burnard, 2012, p.169), described as a "visual-based construct elicitation tool" (Burnard, 2012, p.167). The plotted river drawn in a River of Life shows critical times of change which can be extrinsic, perhaps historical in nature, or intrinsic and more personal to the individual (Burnard, 2012). Thus, a River of Life, as defined by Burnard (2012) is a means to mapping,

> a winding timeline with key turning points, critical incidents or significant episodes (p.170).

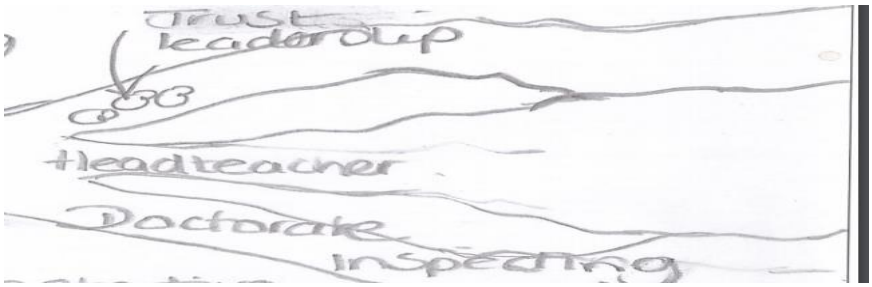
As a consequence, it was considered an appropriate tool to use for a social constructionist and interpretivist study focusing on professional lived experiences over time. The visual method of collage inquiry was also considered by the researcher as per Blose (2022), who used collage inquiry to explore the lived experiences of deputy principals. Yet, this research method was ruled out because the researcher felt it was a more appropriate tool to use when looking at a phenomenon in a non-linear manner. Equally, to give the collage value, could have required more time from the participants than the River of Life and interview together. Roberts and Woods (2018) recommend that collages should enable participants to reflect whilst physically moving pictures or materials, for example.

As a result, rather than ask the participants to talk freely about their career histories without preparation in the narrative interview, the pre-task of designing a River of Life was requested. The purpose of the River of Life was to elicit the professional experiences of the

participants over time and which may have been unconscious to the participant previously (Burnard, 2012). The expectation was that the participants would use their River of Life as a prompt within the interview and talk through how it shaped who they are as leaders. Within the metaphor, the participants were encouraged to use it fully, imagining how boulders or waterfalls may represent opportunities and barriers within their careers. A template was deliberately not shared with the participant so that they had the freedom to produce the information in the format they preferred. Extracts from the Rivers of Life have been used in the findings chapters if ethically appropriate, to illustrate how the women's pictures have depicted pertinent information to the study. Below (Figure 3.1) is an example of how one of the participants expressed their future in the profession which came at the end of their River of Life:

Figure 3.1

Extract from Margaret's River of Life showing the end of the self-drawn career experience



The River of Life was also the first stage of the data collection and the first instrument to be used. Appendix B provides details of the information sent to the participant prior to the interview explaining the pre-interview task.

3.4.2 The narrative interviews

The second stage of the research process was to hold a narrative interview. Mannay (2016) advocates that after participants have created a visual piece of data, an accompanying interview can help the researcher to further comprehend the images. Therefore after the pre-interview task, it was decided that a narrative interview would take place in order to

question the participants on the reasoning behind the pictures and help eliminate subjectivity on the part of the researcher.

When encouraging participants to talk freely, there is a risk that they might not cover the concepts a study seeks to explore or provide responses which are too broad to analyse (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, a completely unstructured narrative interview was rejected. Structured interviews were also dismissed by the researcher, because although they provide a systematic approach to the question and answer process and can ensure greater consistency, they offer less scope for exploration of interviewee responses (Cohen et al., 2011). Yet, using questions which are semi-structured permits flexibility, because the researcher can veer away from the original set of questions if the interviewee has already answered the question in a previous response but a core focus can be adhered to. Consequently, because the researcher wanted to achieve free-flowing talk but also explore key concepts, a set of pre-determined semi-structured questions were also employed in order to gain consistency across the interviews (section 3.6).

3.5 Details of the participants and their contexts

Mindful that this study focuses on female secondary school headteachers, the sample chosen needed to follow the essence of purposive sampling which means that specific people were chosen representing the phenomena to be examined (Bryman, 2012). There is debate in extant literature that there is not enough justification of sample size in qualitative research and that there is a lack of literature regarding this (Boddy, 2016). Indeed, sample sizes can vary from one participant to many and still be worthy of publication (Boddy, 2016). Generally though, samples sizes in quantitative research tend to be larger whilst qualitative research uses small samples due to the in-depth nature of the inquiry (Boddy, 2016). One implication to consider with sample size is saturation which is when new information is no longer being discovered (Guest et al., 2006) although it is difficult to estimate in advance when saturation might occur. Sandelowski (1995) claims that sample sizes of fifty, for example, can be too big in qualitative research and Boddy (2016) cites that thirty is also too large. Interestingly, Guest et al. (2006) found that saturation of the data was evident at six

interviews and most definitely at twelve in a study of women from two countries. The researcher's interest in the phenomenon is to seek depth, rather than breadth, so therefore, it was felt an appropriate sample size for this study would be twelve.

Originally, the researcher planned to select participants based on their gender, age, ethnicity and location as stated in the participant information sheet (Appendix C) and also for their leadership of an 11-18 comprehensive school. However, this approach to sampling was unsuccessful because the researcher has not anticipated the difficulties in selecting participants based on these prescribed criteria in the heart of the Covid 19 global pandemic. Twenty emails were sent to potential participants based on the three criteria of their gender and leadership of a secondary phase school in the south of England (Table 3.1). Therefore the success rate for participation was twelve out of twenty. Furthermore, after reflecting on the sample and the high profile roles of the participants, the researcher decided not to collate data on the age or ethnicity of the participants at interview so as to not risk identification of the participants. The personal and family situation of the participants, as well as years in service, was also not collected, details highlighted further in the section on limitations. Hence, the sampling strategy was purposive in nature (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Some of the participants were known to the researcher in a professional capacity and the implications of the researcher's positionality is outlined in section 3.9 regarding ethical issues. However, Williams and Vogt (2011) suggest that participants who are being researched by somebody in their field can lead to greater trust and empathy between the interviewer and interviewee.

Table 3.1

Showing the titles of the participants

Pseudonym	**Title**
Margaret	Executive Headteacher
Joan	Headteacher
Laine	Chief Executive Officer
Molly	Headteacher
Ann	Principal
Morwenna	Headteacher
Demelza	Executive Headteacher
Jenna	Chief Executive Officer
Kerensa	Headteacher
Tamsin	Chief Executive Officer
Beki	Principal
Pam	Principal

To further explain the nature of their roles and the educational system in the United Kingdom, it should be noted that some of the participants had dual roles and were headteachers of a school and also leaders of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) as explained in chapter one (section 1.2).

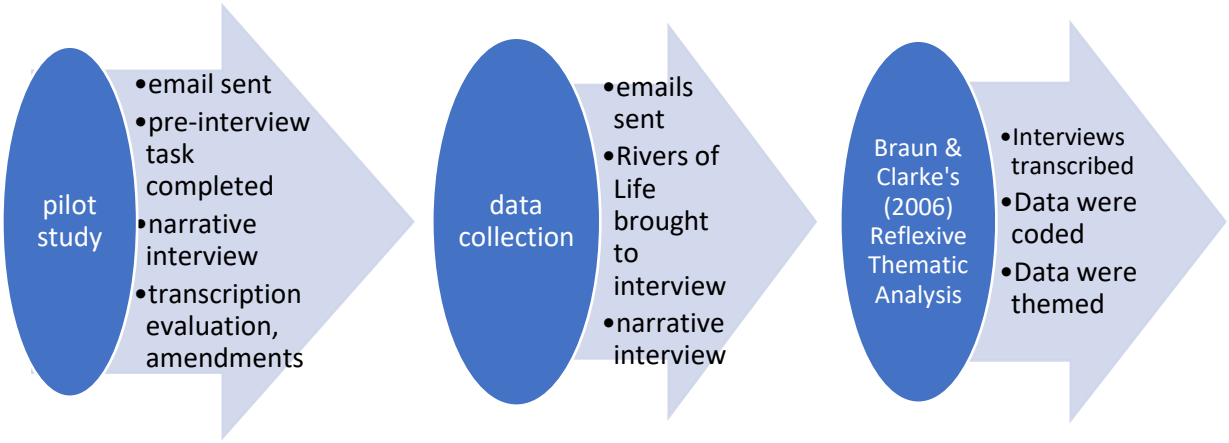
The types of schools involved in the research are shown in Appendix D (Table 3.2) along with their age range, most recent Ofsted grade, admissions policy, gender and religious character (listed by type of school). Nine of the schools in this study are academy converters which means they were formerly council-run schools which chose to become academies (DfE, 2021). One of the schools is an academy alternative provision converter and a setting which provides education for children who are unable to go to mainstream education, focusing on arranging education for pupils who might have been ill or excluded, either permanently or for a fixed-period of time. Another of the schools is a community college, which is not an academy and works with the Local Authority, typically offering education to members of the community as well as to pupils.

3.6 Data collection

This section of the chapter provides detail of the pilot study and figure 3.2 below shows the steps taken to collate the data through to data analysis:

Figure 3.2

Showing how the data were collated and analysed



3.6.1 The pilot study

After ethical approval was given by the University of Reading (section 3.9), the researcher trialled the research instruments through a pilot study (Drever, 2006). Therefore, any concerns with the research design could be altered before the main research began (Creswell, 2013). The ethics application stated that two pilot studies would occur although after consultation with the researcher's supervisor, it was agreed that one pilot study would suffice. Once the data were collected, it was also agreed that the pilot process would form part of the final data set (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). The pilot process took two weeks and enabled the researcher to practise the interview questions, to assess timings and to suggest making changes to the research design in tandem with the advice of the researcher's supervisors in response to the pilot study. It was also for the researcher to practise their own behaviours and skills in active listening (McGrath et al., 2019). A pre-telephone call did not take place, rather correspondence via email was chosen because it was anticipated that the participants had busy lives, particularly as the data were collated

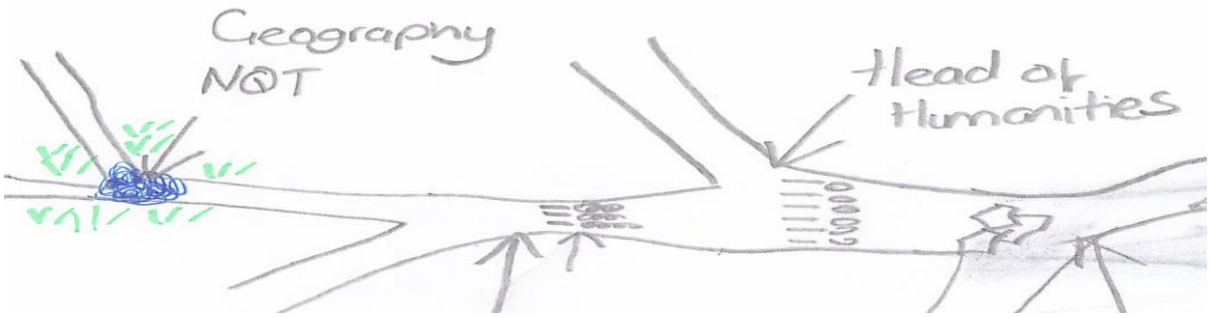
during the Covid-19 global pandemic. The tone of the initial email was to create an atmosphere of honesty and warmth (Newby, 2014).

3.6.2 Pilot pre-interview task

The pilot pre-interview task of designing a River of Life was perceived to be successful. The interviewee appeared to firmly engage in the process of "creative interplay between action and reflection" (Burnard, 2012, p.168). Furthermore, drawing the River of Life free from a template gave an accurate representation of the participant's own experiences (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). See extract below (Figure 3.3) from Margaret's (pseudonym) River of Life from the pilot process:

Figure 3.3

Showing an extract of Margaret's River of Life from the pilot study



However, it was decided that the review of the school website as suggested in the original ethical application (Appendix A) would be removed and that a question within the interview relating to the concept of public and professional identity would remain. Exploration of the pilot school website did not provide relevant information to the objective of the study and could have provided too much data leading to confused data analysis and outcomes (McGrath et al., 2019).

3.6.3 Pilot interview

The first pilot interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and all questions from the original pilot questionnaire were asked. The questions were framed so as to elicit longer answers from open questions and are found in Appendix E (Table 3.3). The researcher practised and prepared their use of the recording equipment in advance so as to feel more confident in the interview. The researcher verbally outlined the intentions of the study at the beginning of the interview in addition to the pre-sent email communications and consent forms. Thus, the structure of the interview itself was effective (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) and the questions seemed coherent in order (McGrath et al., 2019). Due to the focus on revealing past professional lived experiences, the researcher was also prepared for potential emotional responses from the interviewee (McGrath et al., 2019), however the nature of the pre-interview River of Life task and subsequent interview questions did not seem to evoke extreme emotion.

However, after the pilot interview, it was necessary, due to the timing of the pilot interview and also the length of the information given to the River of Life and question one by the pilot participant, to decrease the amount of questions. It was noticeable in the pilot interview that the pilot interviewee covered some of the content which would have been elicited from the later questions prepared, so the researcher removed some of the questions which had seemed to provoke repetition (Gioia et al., 2012). Table 3.4 (Appendix F) shows how the questions were evaluated and the questions in red were removed for the rest of the participants.

The final set of semi-structured questions used for the narrative interview are found in Appendix G (Table 3.5). All interviews were transcribed into a word document word for word by the researcher after each interview took place so that the researcher could start the process of immersion into the data immediately (McGrath et al., 2019). Extracts from transcriptions from all of the interviewees are included in Appendix H and extracts have been used rather than full interview transcriptions so as to safeguard the participants' identities.

3.7 Data analysis

As this was qualitative research using a creative pre-interview task and narrative interview questions, it was envisaged that there would be an abundance of data to analyse. Therefore, to add rigour to the qualitative process, it was necessary to use a data analysis system which would be robust and satisfy critics of qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2013). Considering that the researcher works professionally within the field and is known to some of the participants, it was also vital that the researcher continually confronted the moral and ethical dilemma of this mutual influence (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). This dilemma was two-fold because not only was it essential that the researcher did not reveal the identity of the participants involved but also that the participants would not recognise each other in the final thesis (Tolich, 2004). Furthermore, it was likely that the researcher might continue to work with the participant in the future in a different capacity so could be privy to very personal knowledge (Floyd & Arthur, 2012), even more so when examining life stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Hence, the choice of data analysis was critical to aid the researcher to frequently reflect on their prior knowledge of the phenomena and not to let the insider/outsider nature of their position slip below the surface (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). Additionally, in the interests of increased trustworthiness, the Rivers of Life also needed to be considered in a process of triangulation and because two data sources were used for the participants who chose to send the researcher their River of Life (Thurmond, 2001).

The landscape of qualitative data analysis is broad. Within the ethics application (Appendix A), the researcher stated that they wanted to explore the transcripts of the interviews through the medium of metaphor and prior to data collection explored qualitative research through metaphor analysis (Cassell & Bishop, 2019; Chin-Wen, 2020), particularly because the participants were using Rivers of Life. However, although the women sometimes used metaphor to describe perceptions, analysing their leadership identity development through only this analysis would not have enabled the researcher to find out how their leader identities developed. Additionally, for metaphor analysis to be used effectively, the researcher should have incorporated a more explicit process to elicit the metaphors (Cassell & Bishop, 2019).

Qualitative data analysis involves a system of affixing codes, reflections or patterns to the data to generate themes and commonalities (Lester et al., 2020). Saldana (2013) defines a code as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p.3).

In deciding upon an approach, the researcher wanted to avoid a deductive method of testing a hypothesis as per grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), for example. It was important that the method chosen would fit a paradigm of exploration and induction (Burnard et al., 2008) and allow for analysis of latent meaning. Indeed, codes can be either semantic or latent. Semantic codes describe the data explicitly whereas latent codes signify data which lie behind meaning and require the researcher to be more active in the process (Byrne, 2021). In addition to metaphor analysis, several other methods of analysis were considered, such as content, discourse and narrative although these tools did not provide the explicit structure to give a new and inexperienced doctoral researcher confidence to consider insider bias. Therefore, taking these points into consideration and because the researcher has been explicit about adopting reflexivity throughout this research, the researcher decided upon reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which will be explained next.

3.7.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data in (rich) detail" (p.79). Reflexive thematic analysis takes into consideration the dynamic part the researcher plays in producing the knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2019) because the codes generated arise from the researcher's interpretations. Furthermore, reflexive thematic analysis recognises that data interpretation will depend on the interlapping of the set of data, theoretical assumption and analytical skills of the person conducting the analysis, mirroring the aims of reflexivity which are to provoke the researcher to engage critically with their own research practice (Reissner, 2018). Hence, it is unlikely that the codes and themes unearthed will be the same for another researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2019) state that reflexive thematic

analysis concerns “the researcher’s reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process” (p.594).

In reflexive thematic analysis, codebooks are not used, rather the system of coding is seen as having a degree of flexibility and will evolve through the process. Themes are then created which focus on commonalities. Originally, Braun & Clarke (2006) thought that reflexive thematic analysis could fit with a range of analytical methods although now, their thinking is that it sits within a qualitative and constructionist paradigm (Byrne, 2021), suited to this study. Moreover, Braun and Clarke (2019) also assert that researchers should embrace production of knowledge which is reflexive, subjective and creative, fitting even more so with the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach of this research.

There is a six-step process associated with reflexive thematic analysis which provides a clear framework for the data analysis, helping with doing the analysis but also helping with teaching the analysis, useful for researchers of doctoral study (Byrne, 2021). However, this process is not considered to be linear, rather providing the freedom of a to and fro between the phases, seen as guidance rather than a set of rules. The steps are described in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6

Showing the six-step analysis from Braun and Clarke (2006)

Step	Action
1	Immersion with the data through reading, transcribing, listening to the data
2	Initial coding
3	Grouping of codes into themes
4	Review and refinement of the themes
5	Themes are defined
6	Write-up of findings

Further to the six steps, Byrne (2021) notes that thought processes and changes in the coding and theming should be regularly documented by the researcher. Therefore, the thoughts of the researcher from their own reflexive audit trail of the data analysis process

are presented in the sections showing how the data were analysed (Nowell et al., 2017) (Appendix I).

3.7.2 Examples of the six-step process in this study

This section of the chapter will outline how the data were analysed according to the six-step process and use examples from the data analysis to respond to research sub-question one:

> *What are the professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher?*

Appendix I shows all figures referred to in the following explanation.

3.7.2i Step one

Following the structure from Braun and Clarke (2006), step one of the data analysis was to become familiar with the data. First, the researcher actively listened to the recording before transcribing the interview manually and then read and re-read the transcripts of the participants, making notes on the data set to get to know each participant better (Figure 3.4, Appendix I).

3.7.2ii Step two

In step two, the text was coded although not all of the text, only the parts which appeared to say something interesting to the researcher. Open-coding was used with no pre-set codes. The initial coding process was completed manually, working through copies of the transcripts for all the participants with the computer, looking for codes and colour-coding particular codes (Figure 3.5, Appendix I). In the screenshot from the coding of Margaret's transcript (Figure 3.5, Appendix I), codes of *'quick promotion, challenge, resilience and early opportunities'* were highlighted. Also during this step, the researcher made notes of where the code appeared on the River of Life. In figure 3.5 (Appendix I), the participant refers to a

'tributary' and *'waterfall'* which also appear on the extract of the River of Life at this point as seen is Figure 3.6 (Appendix I).

The colours were used by the researcher on the transcripts to signify different themes and used across all the transcripts. In this example, green signified the initial code of *'quick promotion' or 'early opportunity'*, blue signified *'challenge'* and purple *'resilience'*. A further example of the step two of coding is seen through an additional red colour signifying *'trepidation'*, yellow signifying '*passion and love'* and a deeper purple for '*impact of emotion'* (Figure 3.7, Appendix I). As with the example in figure 3.5, the transcript was then aligned to the River of Life as seen is figure 3.8 (Appendix I) and the example of a *'gurgling spring'* and *'trepidation'*. Furthermore, the researcher debriefed the supervisor on initial codes in a form of "peer debriefing", documenting key points to reflect on (Nowell et al., 2017, p.4). Figure 3.9 (Appendix I) shows reflections from a meeting between the researcher and their supervisors and how peer debriefing continually prompted the research to retain a reflexive mindset.

3.7.2iii Step three

Step three was to search for themes, grouping the initial codes together into initial themes from one participant next to the other participants. For the purpose of this thesis, a theme is a pattern that captures an interesting and significant aspect from the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thus, codes from across all the data were grouped into initial themes as seen in table 3.7 (Appendix I) based on figure 3.5 (Margaret) (Appendix I). Nowell et al. (2017) recommend the use of diagrams at this stage although the researcher chose to lay out the themes in tabular form. Firstly, on an individual basis (Table 3.7, Appendix I) following the advice from Byrne (2021). At this point in the process, initial themes of *'early opportunities for leadership, trepidation for the profession, resilience, awareness of emotion and the prominence of the PGCE and NQT years'* had been created.

3.7.2iv Step four

In step four, the preliminary codes and themes in the table above were reviewed, modified and developed, firstly as individual candidates and then across the entire set of data. At this point, the researcher asked themselves the following questions as advocated by Byrne (2021):

- Is this a theme or a code?
- What does the theme say about the findings?
- Are there enough examples of the theme?
- Is it a coherent theme?

The evidence from the transcriptions were also added at this stage. Table 3.8 (Appendix I) shows a worked example of part of the coding for RQ1 which explored the professional experiences of the women on becoming a headteacher. During this step, the researcher considered what would or would not become part of the final codes and themes. In table 3.8 (Appendix I), the example from Laine was not included in the final findings, for example, because the researcher did not feel the code was coherent for this theme (although could have been more relevant in another part of the data analysis).

3.7.2v Step five

During step five, there was a final refinement of themes to align the final coding and themes and another process of peer debriefing. Indeed, researchers could modify and refine themes forever and the difficulty for the researcher was to know when to stop. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that peer debriefing with a supervisor who has substantive knowledge can help the researcher to reflect on whether anything is missing at this stage. Table 3.9 (Appendix I) shows the final codes generated by the researcher for RQ1.

3.7.2vi Step six

Before writing-up (step six), there was another process of reviewing steps three, four and five as using thematic analysis is iterative and there needed to be constant reading and re-

reading of the data to ensure that the author was not imposing themes or looking for themes based on their own past experiences. The aim of which was to maintain the reflexivity of the process. This step of the review was discussed in a supervisory meeting as evidenced in figure 3.10 (Appendix I).

3.8 Ensuring rigour

Making sure that research is of high quality, enacted with methodical rigour is imperative for all researchers (Nowell et al., 2017). Indeed, qualitative research is often criticised for not being rigorous enough (Gioia et al., 2012) and as a result, the different aspects of this current study have been interrogated for trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017), as well as their credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The concept of trustworthiness was refined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) through the introduction of these terms in order to mirror the terms validity and reliability used in quantitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.8.1 Trustworthiness

This thesis sets out its stance as being trustworthy through its use of a six-step reflexive thematic analysis (Braun &Clarke, 2006) as seen in the previous section of this chapter. When the reader is sure how the researcher analysed their data set and highlighted and mitigated against any underpinning assumptions, then the trustworthiness of the research can be viewed more favourably (Nowell et al., 2017). In qualitative research, credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are key components for achieving trustworthiness. How convincingly the data are presented to demonstrate the findings also increases the trustworthiness of the study (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Qualitative research can sometimes fail to describe this process in detail (Tuckett, 2005), particularly as the researcher is a data instrument and should reflect on this positioning too. As cited in the previous section on data analysis, for this research, the researcher kept a reflexive audit trail of their thoughts throughout the phases of the data analysis to further deepen the reflexive aspect of the research (Nowell et al., 2017). Further, in the interests of transparency and

integrity, the researcher has chosen to share details about what changed from the original ethics application, acknowledging that the researcher is a novice and that completion of this study has been a process of reflective learning (Wohlfart, 2020). Indeed, if the researcher is not trustworthy, then the research itself could be questioned (Adler, 2022).

3.8.2 Credibility

Credibility can be described as the synergy between the views of the participants and the representation of these views by the researcher (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Credibility also relates to the confidence in its truth value (Connelly, 2016). Essentially, qualitative research is credible if the audience recognises it (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Some of the ways cited by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to achieve credibility pertinent to this study would be through triangulating the data collection or peer debriefing. Both methods were applied in this study when analysing the pictorial Rivers of Life and at several stages during the six-phase data analysis with the peer debriefing with the researcher's supervisors. Connelly (2016, p.435) also suggests iterative questioning of the data so that it is reviewed several times, another method employed in this research and led by the choice of data analysis. Indeed, the credibility of a study depends on how coherently the argument is presented (Nowell et al., 2017), including detail on what was not expected within the findings.

3.8.3 Transferability

This study does not claim to present outcomes which are generalisable, nor to present new information which is idiosyncratic. Instead, it aims to influence others through its outcomes and story-telling. Therefore, the findings of this study do seek to transfer to wider audiences in the educational sector (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) although it is not specific about the sites to which the information might be transferable (Nowell et al., 2017). Description of the purposive sample can aid transferability and resonance to contexts (Johnson et al., 2020). Given that this study is committed to protecting its participants' reputation and anonymity to others, additional profile detail has not been included which will naturally reduce the transferability of the study. Yet, Tobin & Begley (2004) opine that in a qualitative

paradigm, transferability happens to individuals and that it is the person transferring the knowledge who is the judge of the quality of the transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Indeed, epistemologically, this study tells the story of the participants but does not profess to these stories belonging to everybody.

3.8.4 Dependability

When research is dependable, it means the research process has been conducted in a logical and transparent way (Tobin & Begley, 2004). With reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the routine of logging reflexive thoughts in a journal is one way of achieving dependability, a process used in this study and outlined in this methodology (3.7). When a study has dependability, it also means that another researcher could follow the research practice if they wished to (Johnson et al., 2020) and as the researcher of this study is new to doctoral research, it is hoped that the structure outlined in section 3.7 could be modelled by other early career researchers. It should be noted that in quantitative research, dependability would be referred to as reliability yet in qualitative research, dependability is a more suitable term to use due to the dependance of qualitative research on its context and conditions (Connelly, 2016).

3.8.5 Confirmability

Confirmability relates to the clarity of how the findings have been derived and the clear demonstration of this process (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability happens when the other three criteria of credibility, transferability and dependability have been successfully applied (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Added to this, Koch (1994) suggests ensuring that the choices made throughout a study should also be explained so that the reader can fully understand the rationale behind decisions about its theories, methods and analysis. Thus, researcher influence is perceived to be well thought through and transparent (Johnson et al., 2020). As a result, this study presents alternative research methods and design which were considered and outlines the justifications behind final decisions made along with any

limitations. This current study also regularly emphasises the evidence-base this study and the knowledge gap it intends to fill.

3.9 Research ethics

When conducting research, it is necessary that all potential risk and harm should be mitigated by robust precautions (Newby, 2014) and the research conducted in this study follows the guidance from the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2018). The guidance sets out five key principles which are that social science should be inclusive, respect diversity, conducted with integrity, socially responsible, maximising benefit and minimising harm (BERA, 2018). Pseudonyms were used for all the participants (Robson, 2011) and the researcher chose to give only essential contextual information on the participants and their schools. Indeed, all types of research can have implications which go beyond the researcher and participants involved (Sikes, 2006).

Before the data were collected, ethical approval was requested from the ethics committee at the University of Reading (Appendix A) and a risk assessment was also completed (Appendix A). BERA (2018) advocates that all researchers undertake a risk analysis of their proposed research so that they consider how groups of people are thought about in the research design process. After the researcher identified possible suitable participants, an email was sent describing the purpose of the study. Then the consent (Appendix J) and information sheets were sent via email (Appendix C) which made clear the intended actions and outcomes of the study as well as the obligation to withdraw from the study if the participant so wished. The interviewees were given time to ask questions before signing the consent form and understood that they would not be coerced into taking part.

Permission to record the interviews was sought and a dictaphone, University of Reading device, was used. The interviews were recorded on the dictaphone so that the researcher could give their undivided attention to the participant. The interviews were not recorded through Microsoft Teams. It was important from the outset for the participant to know that the recording could be stopped at any point and that their identity would be kept

anonymous. Also, that their recordings would not be shared with other people and would be stored on a computer which was securely locked with an encrypted password with the data being destroyed after the study had been completed.

The risk that the reflective nature of the task may cause upset to the participant was considered and mitigated against by ensuring the comfortability of the environment. The participants were given the choice as to when to have the interview. It was important that the interview could take place in a quiet environment, free from interruptions (Butler-Kisber, 2018) and the duration of the interview explained in advance (maximum of one hour), being respectful of the prominence of their roles (Seidman, 2006). Goodson and Sykes (2010) state that informants can potentially feel distressed when revisiting events in the past and that therefore researchers of life history need to consider any emotional implications in advance of the data collection. However, this did not happen in the data collection of this study. At the end of the interview, the participants were invited to convey any concerns to the researcher about the process. As the interviews took place during the Covid-19 global pandemic (October 2020 until February 2021), all but one participant was interviewed via Microsoft Teams and it should be acknowledged that this might have impacted on the outcomes of the study due to the subtle differences between conducting interviews online and face-to-face. Research by Shapka et al. (2016) notes that interviews which take place online may need more time spent on rapport-building and thus could take longer although in their study on the differences between the two methods, there was no variance in the types of themes which emerged. Interestingly, the researcher did not find rapport building to be difficult which may have been due to the insider nature of the researcher and shared profession.

However, the Rivers of Life were not all collated because if the participant felt uncomfortable showing the piece of work, then the researcher did not enforce this (BERA, 2018). Likewise, only some extracts of the Rivers of Life have been used in the thesis and the researcher has used professional judgement when choosing extracts so as not to cause harm to the reputation of the participant through their writing or comments, for example. BERA (2018) cites that anonymity should be considered when using visual methodology

whilst Scotland (2012) highlights how losing anonymity can be at risk when seeking thick description of interviewees.

3.9.1 Researcher positionality

As explained in the introduction to this study, the positionality of the researcher in this study is such that there was a continual need to consider the additional knowledge of the researcher (Floyd & Arthur, 2012) and as such, a reflexive approach has been adopted. Although not a complete insider, the researcher was aware of the prior knowledge they might have of the participants and their professional environments and therefore the need to protect the anonymity of the participants, some of whom knew each other. Furthermore, the researcher was aware of the need to know "thyself" (Pillow, 2003, p.181) and their own subjectivities and to make these explicit to the audience. Hence, the researcher's prior social experiences have been outlined so as to engage in reflexivity as truth (Pillow, 2003), and the chosen method of data analysis has aided to evoke an internal dialogue in the researcher. Doing reflexivity helps to ensure that participants speak for themselves in a quest to engage with reflexivity as a recognition of the other (Pillow, 2003) and consequently, many parts of the transcripts have been used in the findings chapters so the reader can hear the participants' voices. In addition to explicitly stating that the researcher works within the field, the researcher has also stated that they are female. However, to be fully reflexive, it was also necessary to consider how my ethnicity, age, language, and emotional responses could also have impacted on the findings and the way in which the participants responded to the questions.

Additionally, the researcher was considerate of not including incidental data, presupposed impressions and sharing findings within the study which might be damaging for the institution of the participant or the participants themselves. However, being an insider researcher can be regarded as advantageous because participants might feel more willing to be open about emotions and incidents, knowing that the researcher understands the context (Floyd & Arthur, 2012), particularly useful when exploring lived professional experiences. Yet, an insider researcher can also be pulled into interpreting the data from their own bias and assumptions, or the participant could potentially give the answers they

feel the researcher is looking for and take their own role into consideration (Mercer, 2007). Furthermore, the researcher reflected on the relationship of power between the interviewer and the interviewee before the interviews took place, due to their inner knowledge of the field and the public face of the participants. For example, it is the researcher who leads the interview, designs the questions, has the initial motivation for the study itself, so should be reflexive of how power might potentially imbalance the responses, particularly if the topic is sensitive or if there is disclosure, (or possible avoidance of disclosure) of emotion or negative experiences (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). As a result, narrative interviews were deemed to be suitable because they encourage the interviewee to lead the conversation. However, reflexivity challenges the assumption that there can truly be a privileged position where the researcher can study social reality objectively and that completing detaching oneself from the possibility of emotion is actually unrealistic, hindering the research process to create findings which are more positive than they are (Palaganas et al., 2017).

3.10 Limitations

Within the scope and time of this study and following the advice from the extant literature, a sample size of twelve was decided upon as appropriate and accessible for this study and it therefore does not claim to be generalisable. Instead, the objective of this thesis is to promote further understanding on the phenomena and transfer this understanding to aspirant female headteachers whilst acknowledging its limitations (Silverman, 2006). However, on reflection, the researcher feels that if data on the personal circumstances of the participants had been collated, then this might have led to a deeper understanding of the tensions caused between professional and personal identities. Knowing if the participants were married or had children would have provided further context and potentially increased the possible transferability of the study's outcomes. Furthermore, the pre-planned criteria for selecting the participants did not work and in hindsight, the researcher should have been less prescriptive in how they would choose the participants.

The researcher had not anticipated the problems with sharing the River of Life with the researcher (50%). As one of the ethical considerations of the researcher was not to coerce the participants into drawing the River of Life, this aspect was intentionally not followed up. It was recognised by the researcher that at the height of the Covid-19 global pandemic, time was of the essence for these leaders and that sending the River of Life electronically could have been perceived as time-consuming for the participants. Equally, an exemplar or template of the River of Life was not given so the participants started their stories at different points of their lives and were not influenced by the template itself. On reflection, giving a template to the participants may have encouraged full response although using an artistic mode of data collection could always in itself be a challenge, particularly as participants can become absorbed or self-conscious with the quality of the art. Or, a second pilot study could have been employed to increase the analysis of success of the data collection instrument. Equally, some of the drawings could not be used because they would have betrayed the anonymity of the participant. Figure 3.11 (Appendix K) shows an extract from each of the Rivers of Life voluntarily sent to the researcher. The images show the richness of the data but also the variance in presentation.

3.11 Summary of the chapter

This chapter explained the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach of the study. Ethical implications, trustworthiness and limitations of the research were also presented.

The next chapters four, five, six and seven are organised according to the research sub-questions and chapter four will present the findings from the reflexive thematic data analysis for research sub-question one.

Chapter 4

Findings (RQ1)

4.1 Introduction to the chapter

This thesis explores how twelve female secondary school headteachers in the south of England have developed their leadership identities over the course of their professional careers within an interpretivist and social constructionist research paradigm. It seeks to identify the leadership defining moments of the women's career histories, examining how these moments have shaped their leadership identities and to investigate how gender may also have played a part in influencing the construction of these identities.

The following four chapters (4, 5, 6 and 7) report the main findings for this study which were generated by the researcher from reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the data collected. The findings relate to four research sub-questions which emerged from a review of the extant literature and together aim to answer the overarching question of this thesis:

> What can be learnt from the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers which can inspire and support aspirant female headteachers to become leaders?

The research design involved two stages requiring the women to complete a pre-interview task of drawing their own career path via the metaphor of a River of Life and participation in an individual narrative interview. The interview questions aimed to elicit information on what supported the women into senior leadership, identity construction, values and experiences of being a female secondary school headteacher. Extracts from the transcribed interviews are used in all the findings chapters in an italicised form to evidence the themes. Some extracts from the Rivers of Life are also used to illustrate evidence, although only when ethically appropriate so as to safeguard the identity and reputation of the participants

and their schools (BERA, 2018). Pseudonyms are used throughout in place of the names of participants, schools and other people mentioned by the participants during the interviews.

Chapter four seeks to respond to the first of the four research sub-questions examined in this thesis:

1. What are the professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher?

Relying mostly on the stories stemming from the River of Life, the themes presented within chapter four align with the chronological career stages of the women and provide insight into how the participants have developed their leadership identity through three career stages, from their nascent educational career experiences through to mid-career and then to senior career and headship. Each of these career stages is explored further next and the key themes and sub-themes are illustrated in figure 4.1:

Figure 4.1

Showing the key themes and sub-themes for RQ1

4.2 Early career experiences

The early career experiences of the women are grouped into two sub-themes which are their Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) experiences and early opportunities to develop middle leadership.

4.2.1 PGCE and NQT experiences

The opening question to the interview invited the participants to talk through their prepared River of Life describing what experiences have shaped them to become the leader they are today. The women could choose to start their rivers at different stages of their professional careers and five of the interviewees chose to begin their career histories from their PGCE training year. The five narratives from this early career stage highlighted how this year had provided a strong starting base for their new journey in education. Two of the women, Joan and Demelza, talked about how they had found the PGCE year to be challenging and hard work although coping with these challenges started to build their resilience which they felt was essential for their current role as a headteacher. Another interviewee, Pam, spoke about the positive influence of her university lecturer on her development as a teacher:

> *It's a hard course. I think it just made you build your resilience. You either made it or you didn't. I think it did stand you in good stead for the rest of your career in that sense. (Joan)*

> *My school employed me as a cover teacher and I drowned in the classroom. It was the most exhilarating experience of my life, so even in my training years, having those 3 weeks in the classroom, unqualified, acting as if I was, was essential. (Demelza)*

> *I had a very inspirational lecturer…He was one of life's game changers, you would go in and see him and he completely changed my approach. (Pam)*

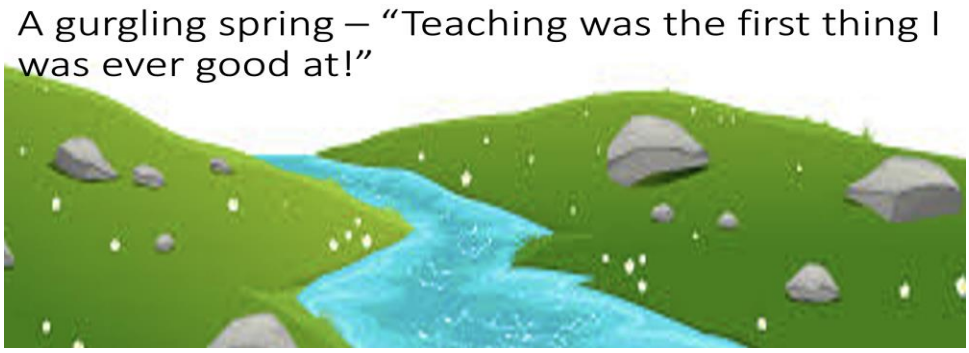
Interestingly, Demelza recalled how at the time she had felt she was *'acting'* as if she were a qualified teacher, showing an early desire to be like the other teachers around her and to achieve membership of this new social group, whilst Pam's inspirational lecturer was her notable person at this beginning stage of her professional journey.

Two other respondents, Tamsin and Kerensa, described how much they were full of trepidation for the profession during their PGCE year. Tamsin's excitement, growing

confidence and success in the role was evidenced in her River of Life (Figure 4.2) through the *'gurgling'* of her river:

Figure 4.2

Tamsin's River of Life showing trepidation for teaching



Whilst Kerensa's reflection of her *'free-flowing'* PGCE year demonstrated how much she identified to her subject (Figure 4.3) and enjoyed the pedagogy of her PGCE:

> *I would say that from the source therefore at this point, it's all quite free-flowing, my PGCE was quite an academic PGCE…..which I enjoyed. (Kerensa)*

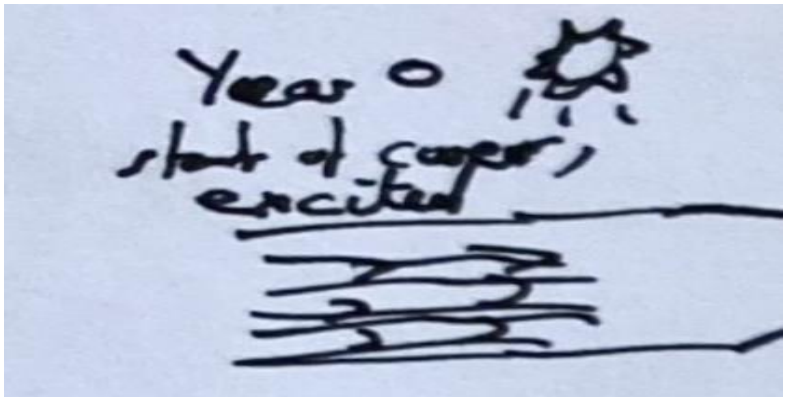
Figure 4.3

Kerensa's River of Life showing the source of her career

Nine of the twelve participants talked about positive memories of their NQT year. For example, the positivity of entering into the profession is observed pictorially in the following extract from Jenna's River of Life (Figure 4.4):

Figure 4.4

Jenna's River of Life showing trepidation



Within the image, Jenna has drawn a sun which is shining at the beginning of her career, signified as Year 0 and the river is fast-moving, indicated through the use of arrows. The opening words of Jenna's interview further corroborated this excitement and also her aims for her career:

> *…. a very excited xxxxxx teacher. I always had ambitions of becoming a headteacher, even from day one…….And so I was always ambitious because I had always been taught that if I was going to do anything, then I should aim for the top. (Jenna)*

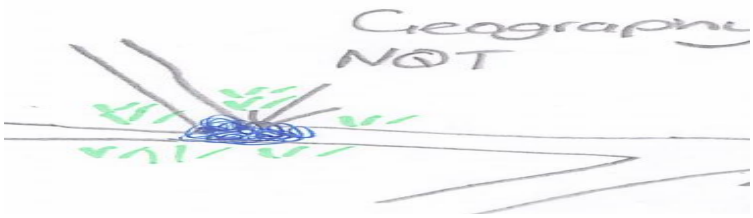
Similar to Kerensa, who expressed firm identification with her subject discipline in the PGCE year, Jenna also identified strongly to her subject. Within Jenna's story of her nascent years of teaching, formative personal experiences appeared to be important too because she highlighted the value of ambition instilled in her from her formative years, indicating early ambitions to be a headteacher.

In Margaret's River of Life (Figure 4.5), colour was used to show:

> *I've put some colour on there, because actually everything is happy and jolly, that's not to say everything isn't later on, but I accepted everything, anytime anybody said do you want to do this, I would say 'yeah, I'll do that.' (Margaret)*

Figure 4.5

Margaret's River of Life showing colour depicting trepidation



Of note, is how Margaret also highlighted her subject within her River of Life suggesting how much she too identified with being a teacher of her discipline. Furthermore, her narrative showed her desire to want to take on the responsibilities observed of other teachers, looking for affirmation from other professionals.

Thus, at this nascent stage of their careers, it appeared that the women were working out how to develop a sense of belonging in the profession, full of trepidation of what was to come. Furthermore, the women's identities were connected to mastery of teaching and as a skilled and hard-working professional.

4.2.2 Early opportunities to develop middle leadership

Another prominent theme was how the participants perceived early middle leadership opportunities to be pivotal in their development as leaders. Several of the women spoke about how they moved very quickly to middle leadership posts and this transition appeared to be a key turning point in how they began to view themselves as leaders and also in how to lead.

In an extract from Kerensa's River of Life (Figure 4.6), Kerensa described this period of her career as if '*streams*' were *'joining*' and notably, the theme of subject specificity remained paramount in her story:

Figure 4.6

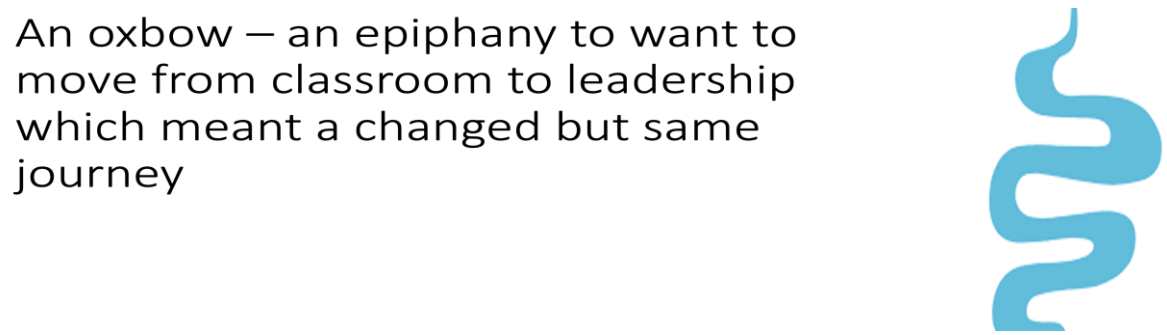
Kerensa's River of Life showing interconnecting experiences

This visual extract showed how Kerensa was taking on new challenges which were coming from different directions and how she anchored this increase in complexity on her subject teaching and developing pedagogy and professionalism. Whilst discussing this part of her career history, Kerensa gave an example of how she '*had little mini leadership roles even in my second year as a teacher',* recalling how this had taken the form of a pedagogical initiative which enabled her to deepen her knowledge and understanding of how to lead on a wider scale. This early experience in Kerensa's career has remained salient, because later in the interview, she talked about how as a headteacher, she always offers her staff mini-leadership projects on a termly basis to develop and retain them.

Tamsin described how her early curriculum leadership opportunities were *'a little practice about being a tiny headteacher'.* Metaphorically, Tamsin referred to this experience as an '*oxbow lake'* and '*an epiphany'* which is also seen in her River of Life (Figure 4.7):

Figure 4.7

Tamsin's River of Life showing an epiphany moment



Indeed, the theme of being eager to take on additional responsibility, to engage in leadership and to seek out opportunity at this beginning stage of their careers came through for all the participants. Molly cited how she:

> *kept sort of hassling people really saying what can I do, from the careers person to the SENCO to Heads of Year. I just wanted to do stuff really. (Molly)*

Overall, these early career opportunities enabled the women to try out different leadership roles and develop themselves as leaders, building on their salient identity as masters of their subject disciplines.

4.3 Mid-career experiences

The stories of the women's middle leadership experiences illustrated how they consciously began to recognise the power of social influence and section 4.4.1 will present the data on the role of social influence both on others and by others. The participants also became aware of how they were learning to respond to new and unexpected challenges and section 4.4.2 will outline their perceptions and experiences associated with this sub-theme.

4.3.1 The role of social influence

Half of the interviewees recalled experiences of how, during their mid-career, they could now see how they had learnt about the role and power of social influence experientially. The social influence they described related either to how they noticed they were acting as agents of social influence or how they were being socially influenced by the actions and words of others.

With regards to influencing people, Jenna explained how her main driver in education had always been to make a difference. When talking through her River of Life, Jenna gave insight into her passion for wanting to influence social mobility from the outset and how she gradually became aware of the growing influence she was having:

> *And if I could influence, that would be good. Or even if you could only influence and make a difference for 2 or 3 that would be better than nothing. So that's what driven me probably through my whole career…..I became more driven as I felt that when I was just a classroom teacher, I could influence and impact the children in my classroom but then when I became a head of department, I could influence more children and then it spiralled I kind of think the more I moved up the scale. (Jenna)*

For Tamsin, recognition of the power to influence when being a leader, also brought with it an increased awareness of how influence can bring risk. Her words demonstrated how she had felt comfortable with that element of risk:

> *I loved that sort of influence and impact of making good decisions affecting lots of people that makes their lives better or will you make an error….. (Tamsin)*

Tamsin's River of Life (Figure 4.8) also showcased her enjoyment for the middle leader stage of her career and how she felt it was a *'really happy easy flowing river'.* This happiness appeared to connect to the enjoyment of being able to influence. Through the metaphor of the *'baton',* she alluded to how her understanding of influence was deepening, how she was beginning to see how influence can be cascaded to others and how social influence in leadership broadens with more responsibility:

> *I suddenly liked the broadness of that. The influence, the baton and the impact and so it was a really happy easy flowing river. Nothing really interrupted that…….I thought, I think I would like to see if that's the feeling I get out of being a head of year, I would really like to be involved in the more strategic parts of a school. And influencing teachers now. Not just influencing pupils. (Tamsin)*

Figure 4.8

Tamsin's River of Life showing happiness of middle leadership

Eight of the participants gave examples of how they had been influenced by notable people within this mid-career stage, recalling trigger moments and pieces of advice which led them to reflect on the type of leaders they wanted to become. From the data analysis, it would appear that at this stage, the notable people were typically headteachers, deputy headteachers or other middle leaders.

For example, Laine recalled the advice she received from an experienced deputy headteacher when she became a middle leader who said:

> *when you become a leader, within the first few hours change something, it doesn't need to be a big thing, it can just be a font, but change something so that they know you're here. (Laine)*

She described how this had influenced her to ensure there have been *'seed changes'* each time she had moved to a new leadership post and how she had often used this technique to influence people into preparing for change.

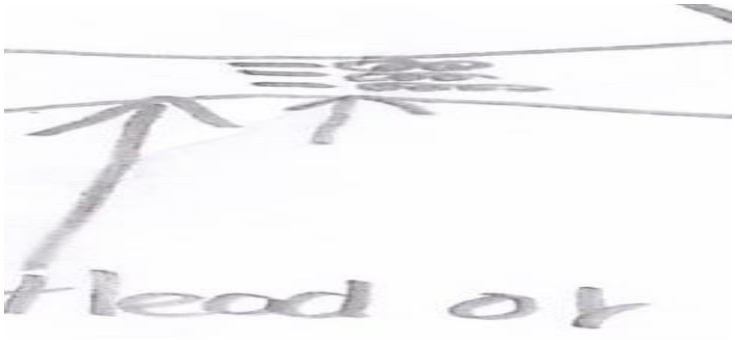
Kerensa explained how she had held on to advice she had been given by a middle leader when she had moved to what seemed like a *'trickier'* school:

> *I remember the head of xxxxxxx saying to me……you'll never lose that professionalism you've been brought up to display. Hold onto those structures and processes because they'll be important to you. (Kerensa)*

Within Kerensa's words, the value of pedagogy appeared again as well as the sign that she was being influenced to see leadership as a mix of interdependent systems and structures. Similarly, Margaret was also influenced by a head of faculty when she moved to a new middle leadership role she felt should have been easy. However, instead she experienced unexpected issues with behaviour management, illustrated on her River of Life as a waterfall (Figure 4.9). Margaret's River of Life was accompanied in the interview with an explanation of how she felt at the time, as '*if I had had something taken out from under me'*:

Figure 4.9

Margaret's River of Life showing the waterfall



She recalled feeling emotion at this point because she had not realised she would need to re-establish her identity again. Consequently, she requested help from her head of faculty who declared:

> *'You've got to sort it out, you've got to deal with this, you are the head of xxxxxxx, I can't do this for you anymore'. (Margaret)*

Thus, Margaret provided insight into how she had been influenced by others to problem-solve by herself, potentially showing a shift from acting as a dependent leader to becoming a more independent leader.

Tamsin gave information as to how she had been influenced by her headteacher who had given her advice on the power of language:

> *My old head teacher said this to me once and it's so true, it's when you see people repeating back to you what you have said as if they had come up with it. …….I'm starting to hear other people say that back…….The echo of it. (Tamsin)*

Tamsin described the impact of creating and cascading leadership language as a headteacher throughout the school and how much fulfilment it brings her to hear middle leaders '*replicate this the loudest'*. Moreover, how she has used this advice to broadcast her ethos for the school and create a cultural *'echo'* through repeated language.

Ann also appeared to reflect on how she wanted to lead at this middle stage of her career via the influence of her headteacher:

> *I learnt lots of things about what I did want to be and what I didn't want to be from him but certainly, he was passionate, he was very fair. (Ann)*

Through these words from Ann's story, there is an indication of how her future leadership identity was influenced through reflecting on working closely with notable people.

Joan also recalled how she had reflected on her future identity as a leader at this stage after working with a difficult member of staff and described how:

> *I had to find a way really to plough my own furrow, kind of around him……. but I think it gave me a lot of strategies to use in those sorts of situations where I become more of a diplomat. (Joan)*

Thus, successfully finding a way to manage this challenging leadership situation arguably showed how independent Joan was becoming as a leader. Joan contrasted this experience with another leader who she had viewed as kind, yet still able to deliver difficult messages in a kind way:

> *And I just thought to myself that you can still be a really good leader but actually still be kind. (Joan)*

This piece of data shows how Joan was arguably broadening her view of leadership at this point and developing herself as an effective leader through reflecting on influence and how to be influential through one's approach to others.

Overall, the themes associated with this stage of the women's career journeys show how their developmental influences came from middle or senior leadership positions. The influences were related to how to lead others and the women were becoming more independent in their thinking about leadership, observing and then reflecting on the social impact their influence was having on others, whilst considering their own emotions and thoughts when being socially influenced by others. Further, the women started to consider how they wanted their future leadership identity to appear after reflecting on how they had felt as followers.

4.3.2 Learning to respond to challenge

Due to the increased social influence from new and broader leadership challenges the women were exercising at this point in their careers, the women were also learning to respond to challenge, reflecting on the need for self-care and considering the positive and negative impact of emotions on others.

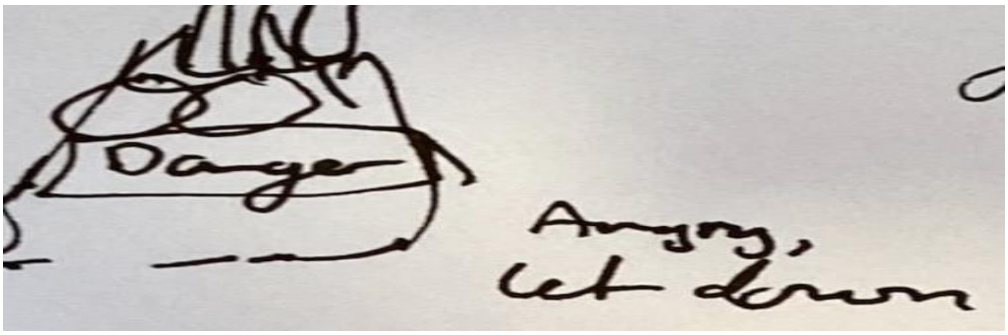
Learning to cope with knockbacks was a pivotal challenge for the women at this career stage and there were stories of how some of the women felt compelled to apply for another role after experiencing emotional reactions, often related to an interview process. For example, Jenna described how she had looked for a role in another school after being unsuccessful at an interview in the school she was working. At the time, she had been encouraged to go for the role by the leadership of the school:

> *I didn't end up getting it and I thought now that's it, I'm off. It's probably my one biggest emotional decision on a roll, you don't value me, I'm out of here. (Jenna)*

She elaborated by saying how there had been no *'support at that point either'*. This emotional response was also illustrated in Jenna's River of Life (Figure 4.10) through the words of '*anger*' and feeling '*let down'*, also through the boulders in the river:

Figure 4.10

Jenna's River of Life showing feelings of anger



Yet, on reflection, although the move to the other school proved to be successful, Jenna commented that it is not how she makes decisions now as a headteacher, providing insight into how key trigger moments have impacted the development of her leadership identity:

> *I think that was a bit of a lesson to me to take my time a bit. Not react emotionally or quickly. (Jenna)*

Similar to Jenna, the emotions felt when applying for an interview were also very prominent to Margaret and she too, described the experiences of being unsuccessful at gaining an interview which also led her to apply for a role in another school. This key incident and feelings were also illustrated on Margaret's River of Life (Figure 4.11) through the drawing of rocks:

Figure 4.11

Margaret's River of Life showing rocks in the river

Margaret recounted a further example of how she recalled experiencing emotion whilst applying for an internal headteacher post. Pertinent in Margaret's River of Life (Figure 4.12) is a drawing of an oxbow lake which, like Tamsin, signified thoughts of applying to other schools. However, from Margaret's narrative, it seemed that the emotion was potentially caused by a tension between competing values of meritocracy and extant sector systems for interviews:

Figure 4.12

Margaret's River of Life showing an oxbow lake considering other options

The words from her explanation below showed why she felt emotion and also the advice she was given by her executive headteacher as to how succeeding at the interview process would give her credibility, important for inspiring group membership. The advice from the notable person in Margaret's story highlighted how role models can help make sense of phenomenon:

> *I drew an oxbow lake there as I actually went to look at a few other schools as I was also quite cross that I was being made to apply for this…..I remember Jeremy* saying to me '….you need to prove that you've earned this job and….that will give you credibility'. (Margaret)*

In addition to the data already presented, Tamsin also told a story of how she had applied for a senior middle leadership position in her school and said:

> *I was unsuccessful and I was so mad, I was so mad, that's what gave me the energy to get on the bridge and to have a look over the side of the river to see could I move. (Tamsin)*

This significant moment is illustrated in Tamsin's River of Life (Figure 4.13) and encapsulates how pivotal this moment of perceived failure had been at the time.

Figure 4.13

Tamsin's River of Life showing the bridge to other schools

Similarly, Pam told a story of how when she applied for a middle leadership post, nobody was given the role. Pam explained that she had found this decision difficult to accept, because it had appeared that nobody had been perceived as good enough for the post, including herself. However, she commented on how failure in this way had actually built her resilience further:

> *I found that quite hard to take and it knocked my confidence a lot but it was good for me because I think you need those knocks sometimes and you have to pick yourself back up again. (Pam)*

Thus, the mid-career part of the women's career journeys led the women to develop the self through reflecting on positive and negative experiences and how they had coped with responding to new challenges. The participants' narratives presented information as to how others made them feel emotionally and they began to identify key values and beliefs of how they wanted to lead in the future and be seen as a leader. Notably, not all the experiences were smooth and the participants gave examples of how they felt and then overcame knockbacks in this middle stage of their careers.

4.4 Senior career experiences

The final part of this chapter reveals the findings relating to the senior career experiences of the participants. In two sub-themes, it highlights the key defining moments of their senior leadership journeys and what experiences encouraged the women to become headteachers.

4.4.1 Key defining moments of senior leadership

The common thread for this theme was that senior career experiences were connected to experiential learning of leadership. When the experiences were favourable, the women expressed confidence and a comfortability with their environment. For example, for Tamsin, deputy headship was a very successful time as seen in her River of Life (Figure 4.14):

Figure 4.14

Tamsin's River of Life showing reflection of senior leadership

Tamsin recalled how the panacea of senior leadership intrigued her, showing her developed awareness of how leadership is connected to structures and processes. Figure 4.15 shows how she was receiving recognition from others and that her sphere of social influence had broadened. She also said:

> *It was busy and it was demanding, it was really hard and very often it was also pretty tranquil because I worked with people I really rated. I had a headteacher that was really good. (Tamsin)*

Tamsin's words suggested that as a senior leader she was confident, happy, challenged but supported by her headteacher. Moreover, she saw the strengths of the people around her, using the word panacea to highlight her growing philosophy of leadership.

Another interviewee, Morwenna, also alluded to the hard work that was needed at deputy headteacher level and to the close affinity and identity she had with the school community:

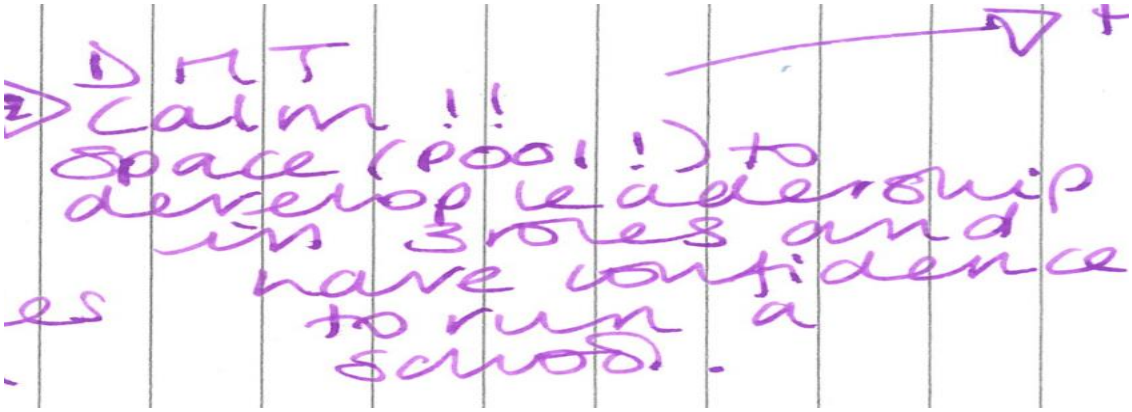
> *As deputy, and I think it's true of anybody who's been anywhere for a long time, I knew where every key was, every room was, I was teaching children of people I had taught at the school, so I became the 'go-to' person and that's hard work. (Morwenna)*

Arguably, Morwenna was working interdependently at this stage and felt a responsibility for the welfare and development of others.

Kerensa also talked about her experiences as a deputy and valued the opportunity she had to rotate through all the diverse roles within a senior leadership team. Her thoughts on this career stage are demonstrated in her River of Life (Figure 4.15):

Figure 4.15

Kerensa's River of Life showing deputy headship as a period of calm



Tellingly, Kerensa reported that this period of her career was *'calm'* which is similar to Tamsin who described deputy headship as *'tranquil'*. Kerensa's use of the word *'space'* is also intriguing as it implies that she was given autonomy and trust to lead interdependently. Moreover, Kerensa felt she had developed the essential knowledge needed for headship which strengthened her leadership self-concept and confidence in knowing she could do the role.

Commenting on deputy headship, Laine also narrated how she had been given space to lead and a broad portfolio of opportunities:

> *I was also given a lot of leeway by John* who basically gave me my portfolio and let me run with it which I think is great as it allowed me to get that breadth of*

> *experience which has been vital, I don't think I would have got to this position if I hadn't been able to do that. (Laine)*

Consequently, it would seem that some of the participants enjoyed the freedom they had at deputy headteacher level and saw the breadth of opportunity as a key learning point to become a headteacher. These women were grateful for the trust and affirmation they had been shown by their headteachers to work interdependently towards shared goals. Their relationship with the headteacher appeared to be positive.

Moving to experiences which were both positive and negative at senior leadership level, Pam stated how she had taken on the role of assistant headteacher in charge of data and said:

> *I learnt a huge amount in a short amount of time. It was an incredibly steep learning curve. I wouldn't turn back time and not do it. I came away far stronger from having that experience. (Pam)*

Adding to her story, Pam also recollected how:

> *You were sometimes blamed for everything which was hard at the time…..and helped me now, I hope, to strike the right balance between measuring and holding people to account and doing it in a way that is ethically the right way, supportive and for the right reasons. (Pam)*

Thus it would seem, that through these experiences, Pam had reflected on how she wanted to lead people and how to instigate accountability for the outcomes of her school in a fair way.

Another interviewee, Joan, commented on the more negative experiences she had as a deputy headteacher and akin to some of the other participants, also described how the work was difficult:

> *There were quite a lot of blockers in the school at all levels. It was very, very difficult and I often refer to it as the 'dark days'. (Joan)*

These *'dark days'* related to the problems Joan was experiencing with decision makers who did not want change as she envisioned it. She alluded to how she had to negotiate and find her way around the issue and that the reluctance to not change appeared to be connected to how others felt their roles were potentially being threatened. Interestingly, the data analysis of Joan's interview showed how even at the deputy headteacher stage there still needed to be continual development of the self and consideration of how to lead people, particularly after moving from another context. Joan's following citation highlighted how followers might react to change management and how trusting relationships and group dynamics are key to making successful change:

> *But actually, when you start making those changes and then people can see. It's just about being determined and then being able to draw on those skills from previously. (Joan)*

Therefore, the women's examples of key defining moments from their assistant and deputy headships show how leadership became more complex at this stage with successful leadership being dependent on the interdependency of the groups they were leading. The women appeared to have defined leadership identities at this point and were passionate about achieving the goals of the institution. If the women were exposed to broad portfolios of work, this increased their confidence and intensified their leadership identity as they were aware that they could fulfil the responsibilities of the headteacher and in any context. There was also a sense that they were part of a community and able to develop others.

4.4.2 The decision to be a headteacher

This final part of this chapter outlines the factors which influenced the women to become headteachers. Eight of the women became headteachers in the school they were working in and four of the women moved to be a headteacher of a new school. Apart from Jenna, who had always had the ambition to become a headteacher, the other eleven participants

decided to become headteachers as they neared the position and it was not something they had actively set out to do. Notably, none of the participants expressed regret in becoming a headteacher.

Four of the women described how other people had influenced them to apply for the role and how a key factor in their decision-making was how they had thought through what it would be like to continue being a deputy headteacher with a new headteacher in post. For example, Joan recollected how when the role of headteacher in her school arose, she had decided not to apply due to family circumstances. She had young children and was concerned about the role being '*all-consuming'.* However, the headteacher at the time reportedly said:

> *You'll end up doing the job and somebody will be above you, what's the point. Just do it. (Joan)*

Therefore, Joan applied for the role and was successful. It was a similar situation with Pam, who confessed:

> *It was a bit of a shock as I had never ever seen myself as becoming a headteacher. (Pam)*

Her continued story explained how the headteacher that was leaving asked her if she would consider applying and she consequently did and was successful. It would seem in Pam's case too, that the final approval from the outgoing headteacher had helped her to take the leap:

> *I wouldn't have considered it if he hadn't said as it wasn't something I was aspiring to. But now, I wouldn't change it, I love the job. (Pam)*

Ann too, applied for the role when the previous headteacher retired and explained how:

> *I never wanted to be a principal really. I was never driven by that. I was driven by what it was we were trying to do basically and then when Phil* retired, I had to throw my hat into the ring. (Ann)*

Arguably, Ann had not set out with a career plan to achieve the role and her sense of purpose appeared to be connected to achieving the aims of the school as part of a team. Interestingly, Ann continued her story by saying:

> *Prior to this, I would have said that I'm quite happy to drive things but I don't really want to be on the stage so that was why I hadn't thrown my hat into the ring of being principal, but actually, I quite like it now. (Ann)*

Her words suggest how she previously saw the role as maybe being too public through her metaphor of '*the stage'* . The other metaphor of *'throwing my hat into the ring'*, also suggests that maybe she was not sure is she would be successful or not but was brave enough to try as if she had nothing to lose.

The same thread of how some of the women did not want a different person as their headteacher also arose from Morwenna's interview:

> *I decided to go for it because I didn't want somebody coming in and me going back to the same role where I was but juggling everything really and breaking in the new head so to speak, I didn't want to do that and so I applied for it and I got it…. And I don't regret it at all, I'm very glad I made the decision. (Morwenna)*

Again, Morwenna's reasoning is another example of how the women did not want a new headteacher above them and consequently, were propelled into applying for the role through not wanting somebody new to be doing it. The recurrent theme of how the women became a headteacher in an unplanned way, was also seen through Demelza and Laine's interviews. Demelza talked about how she had been promoted to headship at an early age in her career and reported:

I feel that my career has been a bit of an accident. I've never been ambitious necessarily. (Demelza)

She attributed her success to working hard and wanting to enable *'amazing things to happen for other people'* which she felt was her driving force. Laine too, described how she believed her move to headship had not been planned:

I didn't plan it, it just happened. (Laine)

Instead, Laine posited that for her, it had been a mix of luck, the right time and the right place. Furthermore, she applied because she felt she had the support of the staff which was important for her:

I wouldn't have applied for the job if I didn't feel I had the majority of staff support. (Laine)

Therefore, the data shows how some of the women needed affirmation from their outgoing headteachers to feel confident enough to apply for the role despite the confidence in their deputy leadership identities. The data also illustrated how there was a reluctance from the women to work for a new headteacher who they were unfamiliar with and this impending change encouraged them to envisage themselves in this role and apply.

Contrastingly, Kerensa and Tamsin talked about how they applied for headship roles in new schools. For instance, Kerensa's narrative demonstrated why she had felt ready to apply for headship. Having had the experience of leading a broad whole school portfolio of responsibility, she knew she was confident to take on the role and this confidence was connected to the embedded skills she had developed. In the interview, Kerensa reported:

In my little diagram I've gone 'HT' and then it's just hanging there because I think, you know, I had that confidence to be a headteacher, I knew I had the skills to do it. (Kerensa)

Tamsin described how she decided to apply for headship and her story is metaphorically akin to how Ann perceived her application for headship as like '*throwing her hat in the ring'*, almost as if they were prepared for failure. Tamsin said:

> *I thought I would push the door to headship. (Tamsin)*

Tamsin elucidated further by explaining how as a deputy, she had thought about how other members of staff were moving on to new roles which led her to tell herself that she could do the role of a headteacher. Worthy of mention are Tamsin's reflections on how when she was applying for a headship role, she was looking for a school where she would *'fit'* and reported:

> *..you've got to see if you fit with each other. (Tamsin)*

The idea of a headteacher 'fitting' with a school was also raised by Joan who said:

> *I think finding a school, in my book, to be a head of is the same as finding a house to live in. (Joan)*

Overall, the senior leadership experiences of the women showed how they had achieved strong leadership identities as deputy and assistant headteachers, actively contributing to the goals of the community. The women appeared to have good working relationships with their headteachers who were often a key factor in why the women applied for the role of headteacher, particularly as the women arguably did not see their future selves as headteachers before the impending departure of their own headteacher.

4.5 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the findings to answer research sub-question one:

RQ1. What are the professional experiences which led to the participants to become a headteacher?

In summary, the women recalled starting their teaching careers with trepidation, moving quickly to leading small curriculum projects which led to growth in self-esteem, resilience and experience of leadership. At this nascent phase of their careers, the women identified strongly with their subject disciplines and sought a sense of belonging to the profession. Within their mid-careers, the participants were cognisant of social influence and by reflecting on how they were being led, the women considered their future leadership identities. Notably, some of the women experienced setbacks from interviews which they recollected as critical moments in learning how to respond to challenge. Finally, the move to headship was mostly unplanned with some of the women describing that they applied after being encouraged by their headteacher. Or, the women felt ready to apply for the role due to positive and experiential leadership development opportunities at deputy headteacher level.

The next chapter will explore the findings associated with research sub-question two*:*

RQ2. How do the participants construct their leadership identity?

Chapter 5

Findings (RQ2)

5.1 Introduction to the chapter

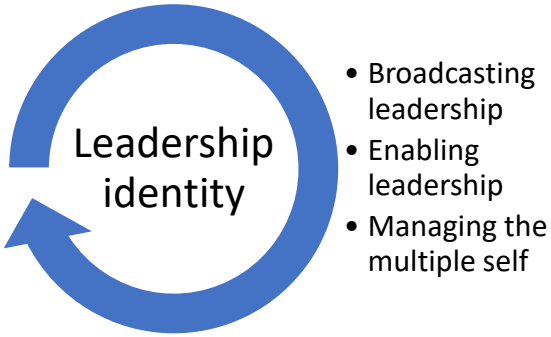
In this chapter, a summary is presented of the themes relating to the second research sub-question of this study:

RQ2. How do the participants construct their leadership identity?

The chapter is organised into three key themes outlined in figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1

Diagram showing the interlapping themes of how leadership identity is constructed



The data analysis suggested that the women constructed their leadership identity in three main ways which are through broadcasting their leadership, enabling leadership and by managing the multiple self. The data for each of these themes will be presented next.

5.2 Broadcasting leadership

During their narrative interviews, the women were asked open questions about how they thought they constructed their leadership identity. Over half of the participants talked about how they endeavoured to use communication strategically to articulate their ethos

and aims for the school and gave specific examples of how they aim to broadcast this vision to pupils, staff, parents and governors. The women appeared to take every opportunity possible to engage these different groups in meaningful dialogue with a view to enhancing the interdependency of the groups so they would in turn impact positively on the leadership of the school. To this end, the women spoke about how they use language and communication in a conscious and planned way to inform the school community of their leadership philosophy and strategic direction of the school.

For example, two of the women recounted how they use routine gatherings of people, such as staff meetings and assemblies, to articulate their sense of purpose to the people in their school communities. One of the informants, Beki, explained how she communicates her educational values to her staff and described this rhetoric as being akin to a *'mantra'*:

> *…I think I probably chant my mantra, probably my identity, talking about the children, always talking about ambition, I do talk about love a lot…….chanting in every staff meeting, let's be ambitious, let's be positive, let's put on a face sometimes. (Beki)*

These words showed how Beki continually shares her leadership identity with her staff, constructing her identity with the language she uses to express her core values as a leader of having professional love for the children and an ethos of ambition and motivation. Beki implied that she does this repeatedly, almost as if it were a performance, so as to emphasise to her teachers its importance to her as the leader of a school and for her mantra to become part of the school culture. Another interviewee, Laine, gave a similar view and said:

> *I always say to new headteachers and new leaders, you can never ram that culture stuff home soon enough…..It's the same with the kids, if you want them to know what you're going for, you need to ram it home in every assembly. (Laine)*

Laine's example also demonstrated how she expresses her leadership identity through repeated broadcasting of her aims for the school in assemblies, thus communicating to both staff and pupils simultaneously, taking full advantage of an opportunity to create a shared

understanding and culture. Laine's words also provide information on how she identifies as a leader of others and sees her role as a headteacher to develop the leadership capacity of people new to the role.

Another two participants, Molly and Tamsin, gave examples of how they construct their leadership identity when working with their governing body through being open and honest. For example, Molly detailed how she is deliberately transparent in dialogue about the leadership of the school with her chair of governors:

> *I've told them when I think they're not challenging me enough, we need to sit down and work out the questioning, because we need to be more robust in that and Ofsted will expect you to be more robust. We need to get training, I don't hide things from them. I have very open conversations with my chair of governors. We work collaboratively on all sorts of things. (Molly)*

Interestingly, Molly used the word collaborative to describe her relationship with the chair of governors suggesting a confidence in sharing the leadership of the school with a high stakes group. There is an honesty about her leadership which she is willing to divulge, even with key stakeholders, and this honesty appears to strengthen her relationship with her governing body, conveying how she is open to self-development and feedback. In the same vein, Tamsin also talked about her relationship with her governing body and her narrative raised similar points:

> *I would much rather be completely transparent with the different stakeholders that it's the appropriate level for, so for the Governance of the Trust and of the school they will genuinely know warts and all. I want them to know that because that's part of my self-protection, isn't it? (Tamsin)*

Here, Tamsin showed how she too portrays a confidence in sharing positive and negative school data with her governors. Tamsin's approach exemplified how she seeks advice on the leadership of the school from the governing body but also how she sees the group of governors as having shared responsibility of leadership. Both these examples from Molly

and Tamsin convey how they practise leadership as headteachers and how they potentially see the power of leadership as non-positional. Indeed, when broadcasting their leadership identity, the women appear to be constantly thinking about how to lead and manage all the stakeholders within the community through the building of trusting relationships.

As this study took place in the global Covid-19 pandemic, three of the participants elaborated on how they had recently increased the amount of email communication to their parents. It would seem from these examples, that the women were often emailing their parents weekly with the aim of maintaining the dialogue and relationship with their school communities. For instance, Pam reported how:

> *Communication to me is extremely important and I like to be transparent. It's striking that balance to parents between enough communication so that everyone feels reassured and knows what's going on and that you're being transparent yet not bombarding them with loads and loads of information which is irrelevant or overwhelming. (Pam)*

This extract gave further information on how Pam broadcasts her identity as the leader of the school to parents. Through her regular communication, she seemed to want to show the families of her school community how she was still caring for them and arguably wanted to be seen as a reassuring and stable leader during a turbulent time. Moreover, she appeared to want to present her identity as somebody who is understanding and community-minded. This provides insight into how educational leadership identities might rely on strong dyadic relationships because without the social interaction of groups and people, it becomes more difficult to influence and to possibly lead an organisation and the people within it. Another of the participants, Ann, gave a similar account of her experiences of emailing parents during the pandemic:

> *It was a way of actually trying to keep connected. Actually if you send an email out, it's an easy way for people to quickly come back to you if they don't agree or they've got something they want to tell you. (Ann)*

From Ann's reflection, there was an indication of how communicating to people invites feedback which appears to be a way of establishing the trust needed to lead groups of people. Through adapting quickly to a different mode of talk within the school community, Ann arguably maintained the open dialogue for feedback with a view to leading people in an unknown context and from a different physical position within the school.

There were further examples in the data of how the women broadcast their leadership identity to parents in order to establish who they are as leaders and what they stand for. For instance, Joan explained how she always informs prospective parents and pupils of her values at open-evenings, because she wants them to know from the outset what to expect from her school. Joan said:

> *I say to them that what you're signing up for is like a seven year partnership and you need to know whether or not actually my ethos and the way I lead the school is actually akin to what you think of as a family. (Joan)*

In this example, the recurrent theme of communicating openly and transparently appears again when she described how she wanted prospective parents and pupils to know the ethos of the school, suggesting that aligning with the social identity of the school is important if pupils are to thrive. Furthermore, Joan's words demonstrated how much the leader of the school can broadcast the atmosphere of the institution through what they say and how they act. Even at a prospective parent's evening, this example showed how Joan asserted to remain as true to her values as possible so there were no surprises for the parents and pupils if they chose her school for their child's school career. In addition, the importance of connecting with people re-emerges again through her use of the word *'partnership'*, suggesting that Joan's leadership identity is outward looking, about working together, building relationships and about welcoming everybody into a group ethos where opinion is valued.

Demelza talked about how she used her website to broadcast her leadership identity and said:

> *I think that it definitely sets that tone. It also sets a tone of cutting through the noise, so there are a couple of strategic things I have decided are important to us and the school….. (Demelza)*

Demelza was referring to how she uses her website as a means to increasing consistency and clarity of message or to dispel any potential misunderstandings there might be within the school community about specific expectations. The example from Demelza thus illustrates how the written word is also used strategically to lead the school and engage people in its objectives. Another participant, Tamsin, also expressed how she uses her website to set the tone and clarity of message for her school. In her story, the recurrent concept of honesty shone through again coupled with an emphasis on high standards and ambition for the pupils:

> *My headteacher's part of the website talks about standards and ambitions for the students in the school but also the importance of integrity of relationships and warmth and positivity and all those things. (Tamsin)*

Hence, the data analysis highlights how the women construct their leadership identity through consciously and strategically broadcasting their leadership philosophy to the groups of people they lead through the variety of modes of talk available to them. This philosophy appears to be built on values of integrity and care with the aim of establishing trusting relationships enabling effective leadership of the school. Moreover, the different leadership identities of the women, replicated in words, are stated publicly for all stakeholders to see and hear. Indeed, the importance the women place on what they say as leaders is exemplified by Kerensa who said:

> *I don't underestimate the weight that people take one's comments as a headteacher so you have to be really conscious about that. (Kerensa)*

As a consequence, these women try to use every opportunity, either in the spoken or written word, to carefully broadcast what they stand for and what their ambitions for the school community are. Connectivity with all people involved in the school is arguably

important to the women and they believe in establishing warm, open and honest relationships in order to foster feedback that will enable them to further enhance an atmosphere of trust to aid leadership of their schools. Their leadership identity seems to be communicated as a two-way or group process and not as an identity that stands alone and positionally at the top.

5.3 Enabling leadership

In addition to discussing how the participants broadcast their leadership identity, the women also gave information on how they enable leadership and thus their perceptions of what others experience through their leadership. From the data analysis, it appeared that the women lead their staff through delegation and empowerment, conveying a commitment to creating future leaders. Furthermore, as the leader of the school, the women portrayed a belief in establishing the best conditions and environment for success so that staff, and as a consequence pupils, are able to grow. Examples of how these codes were presented by the women during the interviews are shown in this next part of the chapter.

One woman, Molly, referred to how she uses leadership skills such as coaching and motivating to develop people. Molly also spoke about how she creates a working atmosphere where staff are encouraged to take risks with their teaching:

> *So my leadership style is about getting the best out of people, so coaching, motivating, praising, guiding, a lot of devolved responsibility, I'm very much don't worry if you make a mistake as that's how we learn, from mistakes, I'd rather you had a go at something……Have a go at stuff, don't be fearful, take risks. (Molly)*

Molly seemed to want to give space and trust to her staff in order to encourage innovation. Her narrative highlighted how she believes in not being risk-averse and it is notable that she did not talk about holding people to account in a negative sense. Her leadership strategies in this quote seem to be about being positive, empowering and supportive. This approach is

mirrored by Laine who also believed that part of being a good leader is to establish a conducive environment for growth:

> *The fact that so many of them stay for so long and obviously the kids are lovely and it's a nice place to work but it's also about the ethos and the values being right as if they didn't like it they wouldn't stay and I think that they acknowledge that they are given lots of opportunities to develop, to share their ideas… (Laine)*

Laine's philosophy outlined how much she believes in enabling others to progress and shows how she looks beyond herself to enable the leadership of the school and the quality of teaching and learning. This same idea of allowing teachers space to take risks with their teaching and wanting staff to feel empowered was also echoed by Demelza who said:

> *Just enabling amazing things to happen for other people and I think that has probably been my motivator, my driving force. (Demelza)*

From Demelza's story, it would appear that her leadership identity is affirmed by seeing how others succeed through her influence. Similarly, Tamsin also saw her identity as being integrated with the success of her staff and she even saw herself as a servant to them, which suggests how her leadership identity is not about controlling her followers but rather to provide an environment where they can thrive and again, gives insight into her philosophy on leadership:

> *My job is to absolutely serve the staff of this school, make it to be the best place for them to work. (Tamsin)*

Moreover, the women were conscious that although they should be seen as the leader of the school, they were not keen to be seen as the lone leader. Instead, they were driven to enable leadership through building teams, strength and talent around them. As Demelza stated about leadership:

> *..it's not actually about you, everybody else thinks it is but it is not. (Demelza)*

Contestably, the data showed how the women strive to create a social group with a common social identity that staff and stakeholders feel they belong to. This concept is exemplified through a quote from Laine:

> *I lead and the direction comes from me when I lead because if in some respect if it doesn't come from me, I can't lead it, it's also in part got to be co-constructed because otherwise they won't follow…….the school is not the person leading it but they are quite clearly the anchor. (Laine)*

The metaphor of the *'anchor'* is key as it implies safety and security. In addition, the women's leadership of their staff suggests an ethos of care for the well-being of their staff and also for their development. The women arguably take joy in seeing their staff succeed, depersonalising their own needs for the sake of others and positioning themselves as the group prototypical leader. For example, Joan and Tamsin said:

> *I would always say that I get the absolute best out of people and I can get people to work for me really well… (Joan)*

> *So I just love the fact that the people around me are better than me. I want to be around with people who are better than me. (Tamsin)*

Indeed, wanting to have loyal staff was a priority for some of the women. This is exemplified in the following extract from Demelza:

> *I have a loyal staff now but they also know I need to equip them to be better than they can be, not restrain them. (Demelza)*

In Demelza's words, the aim of creating the best conditions for learning and success re-emerges and contestably, Demelza sees a key part of her leadership in leading her staff to be the best they can be. Ann also expressed how lucky she felt to have:

…a very loyal staff who work really closely together and are very supportive. (Ann)

Ann's extract also gave insight into how much she values her staff working together as a team and creating an atmosphere of collective group support and social cohesion.

According to these data, the women gave many examples of how they enable leadership and how this is considered part of their leadership identity construction. Whereas during their professional journeys in chapter four, it emerged that the women were exploring leadership and developing their leadership identities over time, now as leaders of their school, they are articulate in describing how their leadership identity is connected to how they construct and cascade an atmosphere of teamship. The women appear to consciously work on building trust with the people around them to enact leadership on the level that they are at. When enabling the leadership of others, the women convey a sense of acceptance and comfortability with conflict even though conflict could suggest that there are followers dissenting from the social identity of their group. Indeed, the women appeared to be confident in seeking diverse opinion at various levels within the school, suggesting that their leadership identity is secure:

As a Head, I never ever pretend that I have all the answers. I think that's dangerous to do that. I really do utilise my team. (Joan)

We do clash occasionally but then we come together and say wasn't it good that we clashed…... That's important to me that we have different people in the team. (Pam)

The SLT is an absolute hot house, we trouble shoot everything, we bring a 'thing' in, then we attack it together as a team, we find every fault, every problem, we come at it from all angles. (Demelza)

Thus, they appear to wish to enable and encourage others to take the lead, recognising where the strengths in their teams lie suggesting a sense of security with their leadership identity as being non-positional. These previous examples also provide deeper understanding of the workings of senior leadership teams and how the women aim to lead

them effectively to problem-solve, acknowledging that different perspectives bring diversity of opinion and experience.

Hence, the data analysis highlighted how the participants enable leadership by role-modelling their leadership identity with a view to seeing it replicated throughout the school and to delegate leadership. From the women's stories, it would seem that these women endeavour to ensure the best conditions for prosperity which are giving their staff space for creativity, autonomy, support and a forward-looking environment. Furthermore, these headteachers wish to inspire loyalty, an ethos of teamwork and encourage personal success.

5.4 The multiple self

From the responses of the women, the data analysis also unearthed that the participants spent time managing themselves and thinking about their leadership identity in relation to the other identities they hold. This part of the chapter therefore looks more deeply at the different identities the women discussed in their interviews and what they said about moving between these potentially conflicting identities.

The most prominent identity discussed was that of their leadership identity as a headteacher and how this can conflict with being a classroom teacher, woman, wife, friend, mother, leader of others. Two of the participants, Margaret and Demelza, described how they felt they had developed their leadership identity since becoming headteachers highlighting how headteachers are still constructing their leadership identity once in post. For instance, Margaret described how in the beginning:

> *I was a lot more a bit of a mask, this is how I need to deal with this, this is how it is… (Margaret)*

From Margaret's story, it seemed that initially, when she became a headteacher, she was putting on a mask in the way she dealt with problems, whereas now she is more comfortable with her identity having worked on it since the beginning of her headship.

Demelza also talked about how she had learnt about her leadership identity over time because initially, as a new headteacher, she had been conscious of what people said about her, either in the way she looked or what she said although now, she felt:

> *I'm more confident in it now. (Demelza)*

Margaret also raised a tension in her leadership identity which connected to her strong affinity to her subject. In her River of Life viewed in chapter four, Margaret used colour to help depict her identity as a geography teacher, yet when talking about teaching her subject as a headteacher, Margaret said:

> *I try not to be the head and try to be the xxxxxxx teacher but I don't think they can lose that as they just know, or maybe it is how I am and they see that? (Margaret)*

Thus, Margaret's identity as the *'head'* is intertwined with how she sees herself as a subject teacher and this has created tensions for her when reflecting on the potential perceptions of others. Her comments also raised themes connected to the theory of identity and how it not only links to how we see ourselves but also how others see us. Also, how the pupils' reactions led Margaret to question what her identity actually is.

Four of the women, Morwenna, Pam, Margaret and Demelza spoke about the juxtaposition between their identity as a headteacher and who they are at home and away from school. Morwenna's example showed how she does not immediately announce her role as a headteacher to people she has not met before:

> *Whenever I introduce myself to people I don't say 'I'm a headteacher……I'm very proud of being a headteacher but I'm not proud in the sense of 'showoffy'. (Morwenna)*

Morwenna's perspective was echoed by Laine who noticed that when she met new people, she felt they were influenced by her title:

when people don't know me very well, they are incredibly deferential. (Laine)

Pam's example demonstrated how there is a difference is her personality as a headteacher. She quoted how she is very calm at school and able to enact tranquillity, yet at home she felt she was the opposite. Her words gave insight into how Pam is aware of how she feels she needs to act as a professional leader:

People think I'm a different person out of school to what I am in school…. It's been like that swan analogy with your legs going 10 to the dozen under the desk, aura of calm… (Pam)

Similarly, Margaret described who she was at school and at home in this way:

I don't necessarily think that everybody sees the true me all the time. I save a bit for home. (Margaret)

These examples all gave insight into the women's apparent awareness of how they reflect on how their personal identities potentially differ from their leadership identities and how others perceive them as people.

For Demelza, the connection between her personal and leadership identities was connected to what she wears and how she sees herself as being two different people:

In school, I always wear my hair up, I don't wear make-up, I wear professional clothes…….I have two personas. (Demelza)

In fact, how the women physically embody a leadership identity was also a theme which emerged from the data and four of the women cited how clothes connect to the construction of their leadership identity. Margaret, for example, explained why she does not wear jeans to school on training days:

> *This is Margaret the Head and an example of that is your dress. Sometimes some staff say 'well why don't you wear jeans on an Inset? It would be really good if you did that as it would break down a few barriers'. I wouldn't do that for a number of reasons as your clothes are a part of you, aren't they? For me they are anyway, they're part of who I am. If I took them off I probably wouldn't feel so confident…… 'A parent doesn't want to see you sat there in jeans.' So, I think that is a staff perception of you as well. (Margaret)*

A number of points of interest emerge from this extract from Margaret's interview. Margaret saw clothes to be a key part of how she presents herself as a leader and has resisted the move to wearing less formal clothes like the rest of the staff on a training day. Arguably, this could be an example of where there is a disconnect between the leader and the followers and thus within the social identity of the group. Additionally, Margaret saw clothes as symbolising her professional role as a headteacher and this in turn has conveyed a sense of confidence. Another of the women, Molly, also alluded to how what she wears can increase her confidence but also how wearing certain clothes might befit perceptions of the role:

> *I do power dress for certain occasions and come across headteachery. (Molly)*

Laine gave a similar point of view and explained how her clothes have become smarter as she has become more senior in the school, implying again that the identity of a female headteacher might align to a form of dress code:

> s*o when I joined the school to become assistant headteacher, each time I've slightly smartened up. (Laine)*

In fact, Demelza provided insight into why headteachers might reflect and question how they look physically as in her view, people naturally seem to judge people by their physical appearance. Her response to others discussing her physical appearance also gave insight into how she has further developed her leadership identity over time and how she has become more resilient to possible negative perceptions:

> *I don't like the fact that people have drawn an opinion about me about how you look. But it's a fact. So I can't fight it and I'm less controlling over it now. (Demelza)*

In addition to how the women balance their leadership identity with being a teacher and their personal self, two of the participants, Jenna and Molly, also talked about how they have different leadership identities within the workplace. Jenna also gave an interesting opinion on identity and expressed how being different people could be exhausting, suggesting that the smaller the space between the self at work and the self at home, the happier and less tired a person must feel:

> *It's less stressful as you are being who you are at the time and in the moment rather than holding on to it and acting at something different as that is exhausting. (Jenna)*

Jenna also described how even as the headteacher, she might have different variables of herself and said:

> *I think it just depends on the situation, you might get a different version of me depending on the situation, sometimes you just have to be a different leader. (Jenna)*

This therefore suggests that leadership identity can be situational and that a different version of a leader might be presented at different times although this would not be a wholly different leadership identity with different values and beliefs. This was echoed by Molly who stated:

> *I probably do think about how I am projecting myself in different situations and create a character. (Molly)*

When talking about her leadership of the staff during the Covid-19 global pandemic and the move to remote meetings, Molly described how she had been aware of people's heightened anxieties and thus had deliberately planned to come across in a calm and reassuring way.

Her use of the word *'character'* is interesting as it suggests how she has enacted a particular leadership identity in a conscious way.

The data analysis also outlined how three of the participants explained how their leadership identity and personal identity have possibly merged together over time to achieve an element of congruence. For example, Margaret reflected on her personal relationship with her school and said:

> *This is my life. This keeps growing, my children come to Mayweather* and I am very wedded to the place. (Margaret)*

Through use of the term *'wedded'*, Margaret highlighted how close she is to the institution she leads and how her family are also interwoven into her leadership identity which appears to be a physical embodiment of the social identity of the school. It would seem that the school is her identity, with various versions of the self within it. Morwenna also described how close she is to her school:

> *I think the type of head I am emotionally and personally are very connected so we're quite intertwined the school and I. (Morwenna)*

Ann gave a similar perspective providing another example of how leadership identity might merge with personal identity over time which has potentially made maintaining a leadership identity easier:

> *I think I've been her so long that my identity and the college's mission sit so closely together that probably if you went somewhere else you would have to morph into whatever that was…..So I think you are more able to be just yourself. (Ann)*

Thus, the women in this study appear to hold many identities and over time have learnt to navigate who they are personally with who they are as a leader of a large school and its community. The women show an awareness of their leadership identities and endeavour to

broadcast these identities through communication. The women also seem to construct their leadership identities in the way they lead and through what they do to socially influence their followers and to empower leadership throughout the school. The participants appear to work on their leadership identities in a physical way too, considering what they say and what they wear. Furthermore, the women gave insight into how they are aware of their different identities, constantly reflecting on how these identities work together. The data analysis also illustrates that the women still do identity work, particularly when they enact identities which were more secure at other times of their lives.

5.5 Summary of the chapter

To summarise, this chapter has responded to the second research sub-question:

RQ2. How do the participants construct their leadership identity?

Three themes were created from the reflexive thematic data analysis which were broadcasting leadership, enabling leadership and managing the multiple self. Within these three key themes, several sub-themes emerged such as the strategic communication of ethos and culture, influencing followers to enact the social identity of the group and navigating the construction of leadership identities alongside maintaining other personal identities, often engaging in identity regulation and intensive identity work in the work place.

The next chapter will present the findings associated with research sub-question three:

RQ3. How do values shape their leadership identity?

It builds on the prominence of values in educational leadership which have featured so far.

Chapter 6

Findings (RQ3)

6.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter brings together the findings to provide a response to the third research sub-question of this study:

RQ3. How do values shape their leadership identity?

As presented in the previous chapters, chapter four showed how the women began to become aware of the values which were of meaning to them as beginners in the profession, particularly when reflecting on their career trajectories. In chapter five, values appeared to play a part in the broadcasting and enabling of the women's leadership identity, specifically their belief in being honest and transparent with all people in the school community. This chapter looks in more depth at how values shape the women's leadership identities through underpinning leadership philosophies.

During the interviews, in addition to being asked to talk through their career journeys, the women were also asked a range of questions to elicit information to potentially answer this research sub-question, such as what other teachers thought of them as leaders and how authentic they felt they were as leaders. The data analysis demonstrated that values shape the leadership identities of the women in five key interconnecting ways as shown in figure 6.1:

Figure 6.1

Diagram showing the interconnecting themes of how values shape leadership identity

The values cited by the women have been grouped to create three values-based leadership philosophies which appear to influence their leadership identities. These three leadership philosophies signify a confidence and commitment to more transcendent educational aims namely: leading with professional love, championing inclusion and advocating trust. The data analysis showed that the women use all three of these philosophies simultaneously to lead their schools and to ensure the positive impact of outcomes for the child at the centre. Furthermore, when analysing the data for codes associated with their leadership philosophy, it became apparent that these values were present during the womens' formative and early career experiences and over the years have become more salient in their leader identity. Moreover, the findings also showed how the women face barriers to applying these philosophies which were related to finance and resource. This chapter will thus look at each philosophy in turn and how it shapes their leadership identity. It will then give insight into the reflections of the women on how they could see the seeds of these values in their formative experiences. The chapter will finish by outlining the barriers for the women in applying the leadership philosophies.

6.2 Leading with professional love

All the women expressed how they consciously place the child at the centre of their decision-making and that this value therefore drives the strategic direction of their school.

The women indicated through their stories that this child-focused approach was enveloped with a shared professional love for the child meaning that the leadership of the organisation was steered by what would be best for the children, as exemplified in the following quotes from Pam, Morwenna, Kerensa and Jenna:

> *We are very pupil-centred and the student is at the centre of everything, every decision we make, the student is at the centre of that decision. Will it benefit the student and will it help the student achieve that excellence….. (Pam)*

> *I always try to do things for the best for the children in our school, regardless if it's best for me*. *(Morwenna)*

> *I've always said to staff every decision that is made will be made in the best interests of the students end-of. (Kerensa)*

> *I think my staff would see me… with really high expectations of what we can do for our children. (Jenna)*

These women referred to words such as *'excellence', 'high expectations'* and what is *'best'*, showing how they strive for an ethos of ambition throughout the school. Arguably, the leadership philosophy of these women is to be selfless with regards to the pupils' needs and to be ambitious for the children in their care. Coupled with this commitment to creating a culture of high standards, the women talked about how they aim to convey genuine warmth for the pupils and how this form of professional love extends to the children's families and the wider community:

> *I genuinely care about them and care about the children. (Laine)*

> *I love the kids, I love the families, I'm in the best job. (Morwenna)*

Indeed, this professional love for the children seems to be actively and openly encouraged, modelled, communicated and embraced by the leaders. There is a sense from the data that

these women not only know the children as individuals but know the families too which illustrates how their leadership identity extends to the establishment of warm and working relationships with the people caring for the children at home. Morwenna's words demonstrated how much she enjoys this part of the job and all the women cited so far in this chapter arguably model and confidently broadcast this professional love so it can be replicated by the teaching staff as evidenced by their quotes. Two of the women, Pam and Jenna, talked in their interviews about how they show that they lead with professional love through incorporating this value into the vision of the school in order for all stakeholders, prospective parents and external audiences to see. Their visions show how these leaders want to embed a transformative ethos through an ethic of care into the fabric of the organisation. Another prominent way of achieving a culture of professional love which came through in the data analysis, was through focusing on the design of opportunities for all children, often personalised in nature. Indeed, the participants saw opportunity as a key tool to unlocking aspiration for individuals which in turn showed a level of care from the school. The commitment of the women to this cause is demonstrated in the next four extracts:

> *We're about people, individuals and that we care but also we want the very best for children and we want them to achieve and do well and also not put any limits so that if they want to be an astronaut and whatever they want to be they can be and we'll try and support them to get there. (Margaret)*

> *It's about aspiration, how can we help to get them there. Really personalized. What we wanted to do was create experiences for them. (Molly)*

> *But for the children, that's very much our ethos, it's never say never. You can do this and it's also putting their eyes to what is out there and that's what the college is about. (Pam)*

> *It's about how life-changing these different experiences can be. (Joan)*

Hence, these women portrayed a belief in the value of aspiration in empowering the young person which is achieved collaboratively through teaching, guiding and supporting the child to success in a personalised way. The women were considerate of pupils' needs and wanted to provide experiences which would cater for the interests of individuals. The leadership focus was to inspire the pupils through an ethos of positivity and hope, where doors are opened and aspiration is fostered.

The next quote from Molly highlighted how she looks after the children as if they were her own and how she leads her school through this approach:

> *We kill the kids with kindness, treat the kids as we treat our own kids and I was just writing an email to all the staff thanking them for their dedication this term and their love for the kids as they just love what they do regardless of how they behave sometimes. (Molly)*

Molly's passionate words provided insight into how she leads her teachers to foster a whole school appreciative culture of professional love, warmth and care. Molly's professional love also appeared to extend to the staff as well as the pupils. Leading with professional love, akin to that of an extended family, was also referred to by Morwenna who described the ethos of her school as being similar to a family due to its strong relationships with the school community:

> *…it's very family, I can't explain that any other way really, in some ways it's like a primary school in terms of the relationships with the community and so on. (Morwenna)*

Of note, the passion for ensuring the best for their pupils and staff was also replicated in their love for the profession and observed particularly through the language used by some of the women to describe their nascent career experiences when talking through their Rivers of Life. Words such as *love/loved, excited, making a difference* were prominent in the data. For example, this was illustrated by Joan, who described how she had worked in a multi-cultural environment for her NQT year and realised very early that this was her

desired career path. The use of the word *'niche'* suggests how she was potentially experiencing a sense of belonging at the early stage of her career through experiencing congruence between happiness in the environment and her core values:

> *I actually just loved being in a multicultural environment. I just thought it was much more exciting, I liked the diversity and I sort of found my niche. (Joan)*

Joan explained further where the enjoyment came from and her value of altruism which has remained salient:

> *….I liked being with kids where I feel as if I can make a difference. That's important to me. (Joan)*

In addition to expressing feelings of excitement, and positivity for the profession, the word *love* was also employed by some of the participants when reflecting on their NQT experiences*:*

> *I loved the community of teaching, I loved that I found it so easy. (Tamsin)*

> *When I started teaching, I loved it. (Molly)*

Contestably, the data analysis outlined that through putting the child at the centre and leading a school with professional love creates a shared atmosphere of care which aims to look after the interests of everybody within the school community. It would also appear that the participants are able to lead with professional love due to the passion they have for the profession, a passion which has potentially been instilled since the nascent part of their careers.

6.3 Championing inclusion

These aspirational and individualised opportunities were also grounded in a leadership philosophy championing inclusion and this part of the chapter will provide insight into what the women said about how they orchestrate an inclusive culture, endeavouring to keep the child at the centre. Codes such as shifting the focus away from academic outcomes and creating a sense of belonging where happy pupils can thrive will therefore be discussed.

Interestingly, although the data analysis showed that the leaders believed in the orchestration of an aspirational culture in their schools, in contrast, it also highlighted that having high academic outcomes was not such a prominent value for them. Instead, the women seemed to focus on wanting their pupils to aspire to be good people. Academic outcomes were not dismissed but the women shared a collective and passionate group value that their schools were more than just places where pupils achieved high grades. Their stories revealed a desire to see pupils become confident citizens, as evidenced in the extracts below:

> *…. having academic success is really important but also this kind of values-driven education is important to me too. I want the students to come out and be confident …… wanting to change the world, making their mark on the world. (Joan)*

> *It's often for me about them being confident and not arrogant children, achieving well and giving back to their community, being kind, being inclusive and not having cliques and just treating each other with respect. (Margaret)*

> *So we run a community for real people and educating kids about being citizens is actually more important than a greater A'level at the end of the day. (Kerensa)*

The interviewees recognised and were proud that their schools catered for all abilities and all children, wanting to provide opportunities to enable the young people to strive to be the best versions of themselves, impacting on their social and cultural capital. Notably, as seen in the contextual data for the women within the methodology (chapter three), all these leaders worked in non-selective, state schools. Furthermore, the women talked about how

they celebrated academic success for all, not only the very high grades attained. These perspectives were presented in the data from Ann, Joan and Morwenna, for example:

> *We're as excited for our students who get their C in English as we are for those who get into Oxford and Cambridge so both of those things are really important. (Ann)*

> *I think some parents they just get really hung up on academic success and I also make sure I explain that we're an inclusive school, so your child would come into contact with all different types of students….. I make that clear too as that obviously has a huge influence on our performance tables. (Joan)*

> *…it doesn't hammer home academic achievement as some do, it does mention it in the context of everything else and that's quite deliberate. (Morwenna)*

Therefore, aspiration in an inclusive sense, was arguably more about creating happy and safe children who were offered an abundance of opportunities to open up success, agency and happiness for the future, rather than purely about meeting external academic targets. In this respect, the women seemed to have regard for the wider society as a social group. However, there was evidence in a couple of the citations that academic outcomes matter for league tables and therefore it was important to be transparent about the ethos, culture and demographic of the school in order to put the schools' findings in context.

For the women, leading an inclusive school also meant that all pupils would feel a sense of belonging in the school which they felt would ultimately lead to success. Contestably, as seen in the previous part of this chapter, leading an inclusive school where all pupils achieve their best was more important to their leadership identity than leading a school with high academic achievement. What was paramount for all the participants was enabling success and happiness for all pupils in all ways and there were many examples from the interviews on how strongly the women felt about this value. Three of the women gave examples of how they saw inclusion as allowing pupils (and staff) to be who they want to be:

I think happy and safe kids are more important anyway……. We promote inclusivity and I think that comes through strongly. (Kerensa)

I don't think that students can succeed unless they're happy so it's about happy and successful students. And that by which we mean of course they probably won't be able to do that if they're not comfortable in their own skin. (Ann)

I think now you can be who you are. I really do think that the education now seems whoever you are that's it. Bring yourself to school, be the best you can with who you are. (Jenna)

Thus, from the data analysis came a sense that these leaders believed that if they could create an atmosphere where children (and staff) were welcomed and accepted, then this would lead to happiness and then to success. This sub-theme of creating a school which is warm and welcoming also emerged from four other participants:

So we're not a shouty school, we're a smile and welcome, look for the positives because that's what will help the children thrive. Yet, I recognise that not every day is a positive day for every child so if they're misbehaving, quite often there is a reason for it. (Pam)

I think our school is a welcoming place and it's very much about people and relationships. (Margaret)

for learning to really happen, kids have got to be connected to each other and connected to their teacher. (Ann)

..we are inclusive and that pastorally we're very strong and that we are interested in every child and that there's a broad range of opportunity… (Morwenna)

The women thus viewed the value of inclusion as able to reach wider into the school community illustrating how the women saw this value to be broader than what happens in

the classroom. Further detail on how the leaders extend this value of inclusion was given by Pam who outlined how having a leadership philosophy of inclusion means valuing people and relationships, helping them to feel that they matter:

> *I value people, people will succeed if they feel valued and the students succeed if the staff feel valued. So I try and value everyone and make a real effort to be present around school. I make a real effort to talk to people, to smile at people, to take an interest in their day to day lives and their well-being and that's students and staff around school. (Pam)*

Ann gave rich insight into how she has innovated inclusion in her career through a focus on the curriculum and how making this change had to come from a clear vision and be strategically planned over a long period of time:

> *So it was a really exciting period when we could really devise a curriculum which suited a wider range of kids, to be genuinely really inclusive. To push to be outstanding and inclusive. That was a pretty long journey actually, to get people's minds to that was a possibility, where you could keep all these learners, where you could find places for them all without watering down the excellence. (Ann)*

The value of placing the child at the centre through striving for excellence interconnects here with the value of inclusion. Ann defined inclusion as not diluting excellence and that it was related to the curriculum framework of the school. Her use of the word *'push'* also gave an indication of how achieving genuine inclusion needs drive and time. Another of the women, Laine, explained how her leadership philosophy of inclusion had been different to that of the people she was leading. From Laine's citation, it would appear that being an inclusive leader is about having a professional love which is 'tough' in nature implying that understanding the children is important but ensuring they adhere to school expectations is equally so:

> *….I can't bear molly-coddling and mumsy inclusion which didn't make me very popular at one point but I think that just breeds excuses and I don't think you're doing children any favours by settling on their behalf. (Laine)*

Thus, the women in this study appear to champion inclusion as well as professional love so that both staff and pupils are happy and have a sense of belonging to the school and its people. The belief from the women is that if young people feel that they are cared for and listened to then they are more likely to experience success later in life. The ethos of the school is fabricated so that it can impact positively on future social and cultural capital and does not rely wholly on the academic outcomes of the school.

6.4 Advocating trust

The data analysis also illustrated that trust was another core value of the women's leadership identities. Leading through believing strongly on the value of trust was built on foundations of honesty, fairness and integrity which in turn led to the participants arguably feeling more authentic and able to build teams and lead people more effectively. Essentially, the data analysis showed that trust is a value on which the participants have scaffolded the whole leadership of their school and they have been driven to foster this value between pupils, staff and other stakeholders. The women felt that without trust, they could not lead their schools in a genuine way. All the women spoke about how trust played a prominent part in how they have built relationships as seen in these extracts from Margaret, Jenna, Tamsin, Joan and Molly:

> *I'm really quite lucky with governors as it is really a very collaborative relationship and they are really trusting…. (Margaret).*

> *It is about trust and a team, not about an individual……I trust others, I'm fair, trust and fairness are my big values and everybody is aware of that. (Jenna)*

When I have conversations with staff, it's easy, because they trust it. I have trusting relationships……. So, my first job when I'm trying to deal with a staff is to get a trusting relationship because then you can help somebody improve….. (Tamsin)

I think it is better that it comes from the heart then people know that you mean it and I think then people trust you and it builds a level of trust. (Joan)

Leadership wise, I think I'm quite good. I don't manage, I lead and I devolve leadership to the people around me. I trust people. (Molly)

These examples show how the women saw trust as a key element of their leadership arsenal and who they are as leaders. Arguably, they felt they needed trust to lead their staff as trust enabled them to manage difficult situations and have more honest conversations, connected to teamship, authenticity and collaboration.

Indeed, all the women spoke passionately about how honest they strive to be as leaders and how they could not lead their schools or be their true selves without being able to act honestly. This is evidenced in the following extracts:

I want people to be able to be transparent and I think the only way that I can expect others to be like that is if I role model that myself. So that's what I always try to do, to be open, honest and transparent and communicate well. (Pam)

….so I can look every member of staff in the school in the eye. (Tamsin)

It's right at the top of my values, is integrity, personal opinion, moral behaviour, the combination of honesty and the moral application of it, even if we don't agree, I want to know. Honesty is absolutely key.

I think when I've made decisions, I've tried to make them really honestly. (Ann)

I am absolutely hopeless at lying. I can't flower my way around anything. (Joan)

So I think my leadership style, can only be genuine, because I can't lie… (Beki)

These examples from the transcriptions demonstrate how much the women value being able to be truthful to come across as genuine. Being honest also appeared to empower the women to make decisions more easily and to foster a culture whereby feedback is honest and more likely to aid strategic improvement.

6.5 Reflecting on formative and early career experiences

Notably, when the women spoke about how they lead their schools, some of the women's stories connected core values back to their formative experiences as children and these values seem to have remained salient, and even intensified, throughout their career journeys. These values appeared to emerge in their stories as they were talking in the interviews. For example, Pam's leadership philosophy on removing the *'glass ceiling'* for young people through providing aspirational opportunities appeared to have stemmed from her own experiences:

from an inclusive point of view, we want to take away any glass ceilings and make sure that any child can aspire to any success that they want to dream to. Also to open their eyes to other things too. I think some of that comes from my own personal experiences. (Pam)

Jenna's words highlighted where her belief in encouraging young people to be aspirational came from:

I had always been taught that if I was going to do anything then I should aim for the top, do everything you can. (Jenna)

Joan's memorable moment demonstrated how when she was at school, she had needed an external visitor to tell her that she needed to have more self-belief which spurred her into doing A'levels:

> *…somebody took me to one side and almost said 'you know, actually, you need to have higher aspiration than you have'. (Joan)*

In her interview, Joan also reflected on how she therefore now consciously makes sure her school takes on a parenting role when considering the future lives and aspirations of the pupils. Additionally, Joan connected this value back to her own formative experiences whereby her school provided the career information she needed, rather than her parents:

> *My own experiences make me think about….the students here and some of their families, not all of them but some of them and the support and guidance they need. Not because their parents don't want the best for them but because their parents just don't know. In that sense the school takes on that much more parenting role. (Joan)*

Equally, when talking through her River of Life at the beginning of the narrative interview, Joan narrated how as an NQT, she had agreed to teach a subject *'completely alien to me'.* Joan reflected on how this had been a positive experience, showcasing her determination to problem-solve, a characteristic which has arguably remained dominant through her professional trajectory:

> *So I had to train myself to do all those things so then it's about that constant 'alright, I need to go and find out', so I've always had that in my career……it's your life-long learner and it's really important for teachers to understand. (Joan)*

Beki's story highlighted how having always felt that somebody believed in her has helped lead her to success and how she sees this warmth and care as being lucky. In turn, this outlines where Beki's leadership philosophy of leading with professional love may have grown from:

I think I've always just been lucky that I've had people believe in me. (Beki)

Whereas with Ann, looking back and seeing what her school had not offered has been a key driver as to why her leadership philosophy is to champion inclusion so all children are considered and provided for:

..the realisation about the waste of school I'd been at, the kids that had been written off along the way, was very much my motivation in terms of why I went into education. (Ann)

Thus, the leadership philosophies and values that the women display are potentially entwined with their own formative childhood or early career experiences. These experiences have arguably influenced the leadership philosophies of the women and are now enacted more saliently in the women's leadership identities, defining how they see themselves as leaders, how they would like others to see them and what they want to achieve as leaders.

6.6 Barriers to applying the philosophies

Within the analysis of the data, there was also evidence of the barriers the women face in applying their passionate philosophies when leading the school and this part of the chapter will outline what those highlighted obstacles were. Five of the twelve women spoke about these problems and although not a major theme, it is important to include these concerns within this chapter to show that to adopt the leadership philosophies successfully and fully enact a desired leadership identity, these women have needed to consider and overcome financial pressures. These pressures have contestably presented a resources challenge for their leadership and potentially caused conflict for their leadership identity.

One of the women, Margaret, talked about how her school has a high proportion of children with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) and the costs of resourcing these needs

is becomingly more difficult. This would therefore mean that a philosophy of championing inclusion would be harder to implement and sit in tension with leading with the child at the center. For example:

> *Our SEND needs are higher and then coming from the very business-like point of view, that's very expensive and to give the children the very best without resource is becoming increasingly hard. (Margaret)*

Another of the participants, Ann, stated that her resource challenge is connected to her workforce and that she now has fewer members of staff:

> *…the demographics of the last 5 years…we've got a third less staff. (Ann)*

Ultimately, a school is also a business and to function successfully, there needs to be careful consideration of the costs of running the school, with staff being the most expensive resource, although arguably the most important.

For Molly and Morwenna, the resourcing issue for them was teaching space and both the women described their experiences of requesting financial assistance to either acquire new teaching space or maintenance to maintain these spaces:

> *The school is in appalling condition and we are overlooked every single time. (Morwenna)*

> *I was lobbying for buildings, I don't have a building. (Molly)*

Thus, the findings show that to fulfil the aims of the school and achieve sustainability, the headteachers also appear to need to have business acumen, envisioning and consider the physical environment and the associated cost implications.

Ann expressed her feelings of the tension between leadership and finance and said:

I would say the biggest risk of not having enough money, it's people get cynical as they say you're only doing it because of the money. (Ann)

Ann's words showed how she has noticed that staff are less motivated to support change when the main driver for change is financial in nature. Thus, adopting leadership philosophies based on values becomes more difficult to achieve if the school is potentially facing issues of sustainability related to lack of financial resource for staffing, buildings and pupil support.

6.7 Summary of the chapter

Chapter six presented the data in response to research sub-question three:

RQ3. How do values shape their leadership identity?

The data analysis showed that these leaders proactively promote the core value of placing the young person at the centre of the organisation. This core value drives the strategic direction and the leadership of the school which is to enable the upward mobility of social and cultural capital. In ensuring that the young person is able to achieve as highly as possible, the women lead with three leadership philosophies which are leading with professional love, championing inclusion and advocating trust. Together these three philosophies ensure that the child at the centre is cared for pastorally, feels a sense of belonging to the school and is showered with opportunities which open doors and encourage aspiration. Furthermore, through championing inclusion, the women focus on all abilities and all aspects of a child's development so the main aim of the school is not entirely focused on academic outcomes. Through advocating trust, the women build and model strong and ethical relationships throughout the school community which reportedly makes broadcasting and enabling leadership as well as managing the self much easier. Moreover, the values the women display appear to be a part of their leadership identity, with the values sometimes seemingly present during the formative stage of their lives or early careers and have and become more salient through affirmation as the women have moved

through their professional journeys. Additionally, some of the participants described challenges in resourcing the school, which can impact negatively on the adoption of their leadership philosophies and in turn their leadership identities.

This chapter is followed by chapter seven which is the final findings chapter and presents the themes which respond to research sub-question four:

RQ4. How have the gendered lived experiences of the participants influenced their developing leadership identity?

Chapter 7

Findings (RQ4)

7.1 Introduction to the chapter

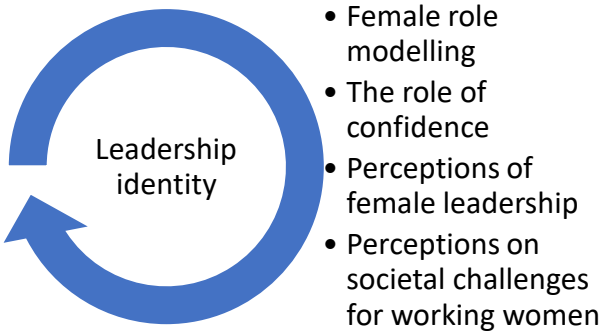
This final findings chapter provides a response to the fourth research sub-question:

RQ4. How have the gendered lived experiences of the participants influenced their developing leadership identity?

The themes generated from the data analysis showed that the development of the women's leadership identity was influenced by four interconnecting gendered experiences as seen in figure 7.1:

Figure 7.1

Figure showing the interconnecting themes of how gendered lived experiences have influenced leadership identity



7.2 The part female role modelling plays in developing leadership identity

During the interviews, a high proportion of the participants talked about the concept of female role models and how either being socially influenced by a female role model or

acting as a female role model, hence having social influence on others, may have played a part in developing their leadership identity over the course of their career lifespan. Thus, in this chapter and in this first section respectively (7.2), the themes relating to the concept of female role modelling will be presented in more detail. First, the coding relating to the impact and importance of female role models in educational leadership will be explained. This information will be followed by a second coding of how these women now serve as role models and what opportunities this brings them to innovate change for the future.

One of the women, Jenna, described how the profile of female leadership has changed since she started teaching in the 1990s and how she wished she had had more access to female leaders throughout her career:

> *Luckily there are now way more female role models in education and in other careers you can link to and I think through social media you can see role models elsewhere whereas you couldn't before. I do think that will change and I think it will change relatively quickly in the next 10/15 years but I think it's a shame that it's taken so long. (Jenna)*

Her words suggest how female leaders outside of education also have a place in society as serving as female role models and the accessibility and subsequent influence that the internet and opportunities for networking has brought. Another participant, Laine, who also started teaching at a similar time, highlighted how she felt she had to demonstrate characteristics associated with stereotypical male leadership at the beginning of her career, suggesting how this was potentially modelled at the time:

> *but it was that era when if you wanted to get on, you had to be almost masculine in your approach and all of that. (Laine)*

One of the informants, Tamsin, gave insight into how she feels her headship has enabled other women to become headteachers in her region, almost as if she had opened the door to the possibility:

Because once the first school appoints a female head, it almost gives license to and acceptability to and confidence in that, from governing bodies who are broadly male lead. …But then when I was appointed, actually other people have then been appointed as well. It's interesting how it clusters. (Tamsin)

For instance, during the narrative interview, there was an example from Tamsin of how a female role model and middle leader outwardly showed emotion during her first year as a qualified teacher which influenced Tamsin to reflect on her future use of emotion when leading others, evidenced in her River of Life (Figure 7.2.):

Figure 7.2

Tamsin's River of Life showing interrupted flow

Tamsin elaborated on this image by explaining how even though she had loved her NQT year, the emotions she observed and the feelings this created as a follower, promoted her to reflect on the impact this had on herself at the time and how it had consciously influenced the way she leads and manages people now as a headteacher. However, Tamsin cited that this critical episode encouraged her to be more resilient:

….that definitely affected my leadership in thinking I've got to be even as a leader and optimistic because my mood will affect the people around me…….But it helped me to be resilient, I think? (Tamsin)

Another of the participants, Molly, explained how she has now been approached to give advice to prospective female headteachers on how to become a headteacher:

> *I've had a few female Assistant Heads contact me recently to talk to me about how I got to headship and how do I do it. (Molly)*

Interestingly, a few of the women were acutely aware of the gender balance on their leadership team and how they have been successful in recruiting and increasing the number of female senior leaders:

> *I'm attracting women. I'm probably going to end up with a whole female leadership team……..In fact, I don't want that. (Demelza)*

> *I've got way more female leadership. All white middle class. (Molly)*

However, at the same time, they were conscious that they were now not attracting diversity of ethnicity, disability or social class into the role, suggesting a prototypicality of their leadership. From their narratives, it would also appear that there are difficulties in finding the role models to assist with this venture, suggesting a more deeply rooted problem with recruitment and progression within the profession. Importantly, they were thinking deeply about how to affect this intersectional change:

> *What I want is someone who has got real experience, who brings diversity to the team, who is different to the rest of us. I'm not going to get that I don't think. I'm frustrated as I'm not attracting those people to my team. (Demelza)*

> *Is our leadership team diverse enough as we are all white British…… I was the only female at one point and now there are 3 of us. I do grapple with myself, have I just appointed people like me? ……So how do I open my eyes up to employ a more diverse leadership team? (Jenna)*

Thus, it would seem that the women were aware of the opportunity they have to act as role models to others and they associate this role modelling with demonstrating how to innovate change. Yet, they were not sure how to activate this change to create a more socially-just profession. This desire to use their position to influence female leadership of the future is seen in the following extracts:

> *I think having coaching and spotting leaders early and giving them the skills they need to build high-performing teams, trust themselves, trust everybody around them. I think we're doing people a disservice if we don't do that when we spot talent….. (Jenna)*

> *Being a Headteacher you can trailblaze that. So really, more women should aspire to change this really 'stuck'. (Molly)*

> *Actually, I think as a Head and a leader you've got to recognise that and then every individual is different but then see what you can put in place to accommodate those different life stages that people go through, because otherwise you'll lose the richness of a staff that has all those characteristics. (Margaret)*

Worthy of note, there were three examples of how the women are conscious of role-modelling a work/life balance. For example:

> *I think that the role of being a Headteacher is really hard. In fact being a senior leader at all is really hard but the average person doesn't see that. Leaders are very good at protecting people from seeing the drudgery of it all. I know there are leadership teams with lots of women and you ask them, do you want to be a head and they say 'no thanks, I see what it is now, I'm not interested'. (Laine)*

In Laine's words, there was a suggestion that as women professionally near the post of the headteacher, they see what it entails and decide against considering it as an option due to the type of work they see. This does not seem to have been the case for the women in this study. It also implies how the followers view the headteacher as a role model and

potentially see them as serving a different purpose as a role model according to the stage of the follower's own professional development. Morwenna also gave insight into how she role models well-being:

> *I never go on sick, never cut myself the slack that I cut other people, I think that's a bit of a female thing to. (Morwenna)*

Within Morwenna's story was information on how she leads herself and what she wants to role model and portray to others. Margaret also provided an example of how she role models her work/life balance and how this may be received by members of staff:

> *Often I think of what staff have seen as well and this is all about that idea of work-life balance isn't it? I'm not a Head who will stay until 7, if I need to go at 4 sometimes…….but that may mean I'm not starting work till 10 o'clock and we've talked about this at leadership and does that look like I'm managing my time really badly as I'm setting a bad example. (Margaret)*

Consequently, these leaders could see how they are been successful in role modelling how to be a successful female headteacher which is contestably inspiring other prototypical women to the role. However, at the same time, they were aware that to create diverse leadership teams, their role modelling alone is not effective in making this change. The women seem to have continually reflected on how they come across to their followers as leaders and what exactly they are role modelling.

7.3 The role of confidence in female leadership identity

In addition to their increased awareness of how they act as female role models in their positions as headteachers, the data analysis also generated the coding of confidence and the part it plays in developing and stabilising a woman's leadership identity. Within their responses, the participants revealed information about their perspectives on the role of confidence when women consider becoming headteachers. Some of these perspectives

stemmed from their own experiences and from what they have observed through working closely with other females, particularly females who hold middle or senior educational leadership positions. The women gave examples of how women seem to want to be masters of all aspects of the role before applying, that they underestimate their capabilities as leaders, that they could potentially fear the jeopardy of the position and that they perceive the role of the headteacher to be a lonely one to be explained next.

One of the participants, Morwenna, said:

> *I think this is a female thing as well, I never thought I knew enough to be a Head, I now know nobody knows enough to be anything…(Morwenna)*

Here, Morwenna showed how before she applied for the post of headteacher, she did not believe she had the knowledge to do the role although now, she realises that to know everything about being a headteacher is not necessary. In fact, several of the women gave examples of why women might doubt their abilities of going for headship and there appeared to be a common feeling that women do not have the self-belief to apply and would rather wait until they can do all aspects of the potential role to the best of their ability before applying, as demonstrated in these excerpts:

> *I think women in general still underestimate their capability and their influence. (Laine)*

> *I think there is a mentality of women that they may be not able to do things, they question themselves, competency isn't enough really, you've got to be super at something before you can even do it. (Morwenna)*

> *I think sometimes women get very worried about things because they haven't faced them and once they have they're out the way…… (Ann)*

Thus, the women revealed that they feel females typically show a lack of confidence in what they can do and potentially hold back before applying for the role of a headteacher.

Furthermore, two of the participants narrated that they thought this potential lack of confidence was related to imposter syndrome:

> *But it's hard work and you spend your whole life with imposter theory/syndrome. But you have to go out and say 'here I am'. (Laine)*

> *I genuinely think women wait until they can do it all, they can tie the bow, a bit of an imposter syndrome type thing (Morwenna)*

Laine's citation showcased how she herself has dealt with the imposter syndrome she has experienced and how it is arguably a characteristic that can still exist within female educational leaders even when in the role of a headteacher. It would therefore seem that some of the women are still aware of work on the self which they need to do at this leadership level, suggesting further that maintaining a secure leadership identity is a conscious and continual process.

Adding to the theme of confidence, there was another example of how these women have observed a potential lack of confidence within the women in their senior teams associated with public speaking:

> *One of them says she just doesn't have the confidence to be the speaker, there's not a day when you're not public speaking, every day you are… (Beki)*

Furthermore, the participants felt they understood where this lack of confidence may stem from. The data analysis showed that the lone jeopardy of being a headteacher was highlighted by the participants when they spoke about why there might be a relative absence of female secondary school headteachers. One of the women, Tamsin, stated that women could fear that it is a chilly climate at the top although she explained how in her experience it was actually the opposite:

> *Maybe it's the fear of the loneliness of it, but I ain't never alone! Everybody says headship is lonely! Then they make it lonely. My leadership style is definitely, come on what does everybody think? (Tamsin)*

Two other participants, Laine and Beki, cited how the pressure of performativity may also be a factor and that the chance of losing one's job by not reaching performance targets set externally could be a reason for not wanting to take on the role. This presents a tension which educational leaders might face in light of the beliefs, values and leadership philosophies which the women hold and which were explained in chapter six:

> *And also you have all of that jeopardy, haven't you, performance tables and Ofsted and if you haven't got really supportive governors, it's a bit like the football managers syndrome. (Laine)*

> *……the buck stops with you and the pressure on Heads is crazy……. but everybody knows a few stories about Heads who have fallen. Maybe men feel they have more confidence to do it, I don't know really. (Beki)*

Interestingly, when the theme of confidence arose in the citation above, the implication was that men might be able to cope better with the pressures of being a headteacher than women. Yet, there was also a juxtaposing example from another woman, Margaret, who cited how headship can be perceived as aggressive with women acting equally as aggressive as men due to the emotional attachment a leader can feel to their school:

> I *think sometimes and I guess you wouldn't know this until you were a head, sometimes it's quite aggressive as well. Not just male heads but also female heads because it's everywhere, it's your place and you're invested in it…. (Margaret)*

Hence, the pressures from accountability, performativity and possible aggression associated with the role of secondary headship were potential factors impacting on female leadership identity confidence according to the women. Reminiscent of theories relating to women adopting 'masculine' characteristics in their leadership approach as outlined in the

introduction to this study, herein also lies the possibility that females are put off from aspiring or applying to the role of secondary headteacher by anecdotal stories of how people have failed in the position. Thus, it would seem that there is a perceived element of risk to the post which is impacting on women wanting to be fully prepared before applying for the role and that confidence is a key element of how secure these women feel in their leadership identities.

7.4 Perceptions of female educational leadership

From the analysis of the collated data, the theme of how the participants perceived female leadership in education also came to light. Four of the participants relayed that they had noticed their gender more at the senior level of their professional lifespan than earlier in their careers:

> *Interestingly enough, I have never thought of myself as a female leader until I came to this job. (Beki)*

> *You can see how both of them (headteacher networks) can very quickly become boys clubs and it's actually very easy for women to join in the boys clubs if you're not really careful as well and I was quite bad at that at times. (Ann)*

> *Every interview I was asked about being a woman either blatantly or in the tour of the school. (Tamsin)*

> *When I first became a head…..to tell me it was very important that I recruited more men because behaviour was going to slip. (Laine)*

In relation to Beki's words, Beki outlined how noticing her gender was now more prominent at the point of being a headteacher and Ann's example referred to how she had been part of two headteacher networks which consisted predominantly of male headteachers. Notably, her experience shows how she had potentially adapted to the culture of the groups

and is aware of this. Tamsin explained how she had been asked questions at headship interviews about how she would manage her work/life balance if she were to become the headteacher. For Laine, it was the implication from senior male members of staff that males were stereotypically better at overseeing the behaviour management of a school. All of these instances demonstrate how the women worked at squaring their identities as a woman and as a leader at the most senior level of their careers. Also, how they had been cognisant of being a female. One of the interviewees, Ann, stated that she thought that women might be looking at secondary headship as a masculine role:

> *I think they see it through a man's lens, it's what puts people off. (Ann)*

Yet, the collective approach between all the participants was that their gender has not necessarily deterred them from headship and that they have developed a degree of strength from being female and also from seeking support from other females. Of note though, is that questions about whether males and females lead differently still exist:

> *So I think it's about having enough females to support females through and also not to feel that you've got to do it their way. (Ann)*

> *….yet in my last school there were 2 women in a big team ……..I know that my voice may not be as valid in this room but I'm going to work so hard, you're not even going to notice. (Demelza)*

Interestingly, several of the women also gave their opinions on how they feel females lead:

> *Because I think women are good at being Heads. I think they're really good at being Heads. And sometimes, better at being a Head. (Tamsin)*

> *and we're at risk of stereotyping here, but women in general are more collaborative, more inclusive and leaders who push rather than leaders who pull if that makes sense. (Laine)*

There are exceptions to every rule, I understand that, and some women don't want to put themselves forward, they are happy to lead a subject of like-minded people in a place where they are masters of their craft. (Laine)

When we've interviewed for deputy head posts or even assistant head posts, the women who come into the room have a greater depth of experience and insight into the role then the men in general, not always, absolutely not always but in general because I think they wait a bit longer. (Morwenna)

Key perceptions coming from these examples are that women like to lead groups, that they champion inclusion and want to be known for their mastery. The suggestion is that women wait slightly longer before they apply for the role so sometimes have more experience. Thus, the participants have perceptions of the strengths females can potentially bring to the role and are championing females becoming headteachers. In addition, they appeared to know what might be holding women, as a prototypical group, back from applying and have overcome their own issues they felt were associated with their gender.

7.5 Perceptions of challenges in society for aspiring female headteachers

As working females in society, the women also had many views on what the challenges might be when becoming a female headteacher and inhabiting other roles in their lives. As seen within chapter five when identities were discussed, female leaders juggle a myriad of identities although these women appear to have learnt over time how to achieve balance, self-awareness and congruence between their different identities. From the data and the examples provided for this theme from the participants, it seemed that obstacles to headship potentially arise for women when they are not able to reconcile their many identities and imagine their future selves as leaders in relation to all their other roles. Potential barriers to headship which emerged from the data analysis were: having caring responsibilities and the lack of flexibility with working hours. However, the women interviewed in this study were positive and forward-thinking in their quest to make the role

of a secondary school headteacher more accessible and saw their role as a female headteacher as an opportunity to be a social change agent for the future.

When asked about why they think there might be a relative absence of female secondary school headteachers in the sector, the participants gave rich insight into how being a working female with a family could be a barrier. Here are a few examples of what the participants said:

> *I think some people feel they have to choose between their family and career. (Margaret)*
>
> *Because you want to be a mum and work. So I think that's probably difficult. (Molly)*
> *I think there's the old things about family. (Laine)*
>
> *I think it depends for women on their personal circumstances and that you're never going to change that even with the best childcare in the world….. I think the women's guilt and you're never going to change that. (Morwenna)*
>
> *I think because of possibly the caring role with kids and that probably sounds really 1950s…… (Joan)*
>
> *I genuinely think it's just, unless you've got massive support at home, it's too hard. (Kerensa)*

Within these thoughts lie the perceptions that there is still a societal expectation that it is the female's role to balance looking after the children with their job. Of interest, is also the idea that women might be pre-determined to feel guilt for leaving their children in childcare facilities and also how the notion of the female being the main child care provider is still potentially an assumption embedded in society. Implied, is that for a woman to work full-time in the sector, there needs to be some additional support and that it is difficult to manage both a family and a career. However, within this sample, many of the headteachers have brought these roles and identities together harmoniously and indeed, part of their

sustained success is through their ability to do this. Three examples of how the women manage this dual role are stated next:

> *I feel I balance being a mum and wife and Head well.. (Margaret)*

> *…..and having children was not a barrier either and I never felt I couldn't do anything because I had children. (Morwenna)*

> *make sure I get home for bedtime reading and stuff like that and I mean that should be an equal issue for men, shouldn't it? But I don't know if it is. (Joan)*

Yet, even in Joan's story, there was a suggestion that there is potentially not gender equity across the roles of parent and professional. The women were advocates of enabling social change to encourage more diversity into the role and one informant, Laine, described her determination to seek more flexibility to make the role work for aspiring senior leaders:

> *I promoted a few women to senior leadership posts, when they had younger children at the time and all of them said they were worried about work/life balance. I said to them well we've got to make this work as we can't go through life not having great people leading schools because we can't find a way through this. (Laine)*

This lack of flexibility was reported to be systemic by one woman, Jenna, and akin to the lack of diversity in role models in the women's senior leadership teams:

> *I don't think we give flexibility when we have people middle of their career, maybe looking after elderly relatives and family , I don't think we give flexibility at that stage of people's careers. I just think we're really system driven and orientated and I don't think that helps females in particular to come through. (Jenna)*

Jenna's narration illustrated how she felt that the education sector is providing a barrier to senior educational roles for women who have other caring responsibilities. Molly also felt

that the working hours engrained in the education sector were also acting as an obstacle to female headship:

> *For women, this ridiculous culture of you must work from 7.30 until 5 all the hours godsend. All of that is really important and I think that's what puts women off actually. As creatures we work really hard and we will do our best as long as our own children and family are fed and happy. (Molly)*

Of interest, Molly gave an example of how she has adapted the working hours in her school in order to give people more flexibility. This approach refers back to the leadership philosophy of trust discussed in chapter six. Molly explained that this arrangement is based purely on the trust she holds for her staff:

> *Real culture shift…….If we can agree that on a trust basis, then we'll finish at 2pm on a Friday. (Molly)*

This quote also highlights how education is becoming more accepting of diversity. Indeed, the next extract exemplifies how the profile of male headteachers is also changing which in turn is influencing a more cohesive understanding of what it means to be a leader of education:

> *I think there are more and more male headteachers coming through who get it because headteachers in general are becoming younger so the men themselves have children at home so sort of get the family stuff. So I think there is more empathy for that now. (Laine)*

Thus, these women appeared to be aware of the power they have to influence the culture within they work and understand that others will identify with their leadership. The women can see the barriers and logistics to enabling change and want to build on the existing cultural changes which have recently been embedded to increase access to the role and diversity in headship. Their leadership identity is thus aligned to wanting to innovate change for a more inclusive workforce.

7.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter reported on the findings of the analysis of the data to give answers to the fourth research sub-question:

RQ4. How have the gendered lived experiences of the participants influenced their developing leadership identity?

Gender has played a role in shaping their experience and identities as leaders of their schools and they are more conscious of their gender at a senior level than earlier in their careers. As leaders, they reflect on the challenges they have faced as women and are empathic and understanding of the obstacles other women may be experiencing on their leadership journeys. These women are trailblazing and want to influence cultural and social change to support women into leadership. Their leadership identities are thus arguably associated with an innate desire to be innovative within the sector.

The following chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the findings from all four research sub-questions in relation to the literature in order to respond to the overarching research question leading the focus of this study.

Chapter 8

Discussion

8.1 Introduction to the chapter

The objective of this interpretivist and social constructionist study was to delve deeper into the professional lived experiences of a group of female secondary school headteachers from the south of England to explore how their leadership identities have been constructed over time and deepen understanding of what supports women into educational leadership. Justification for this study comes from the continued under-representation of women in secondary school positions of headship, despite the higher number of females in the sector. A review of the extant literature demonstrated an abundance of research which has examined the barriers and solutions to advancement for women in educational leadership, yet most of the research has been undertaken either with deputy headteachers, in different educational phases or internationally. Additionally, the research does not appear to focus specifically on the leadership identity development of female secondary school headteachers in England, with scholars such as Fuller (2013) calling for more empirical research to be conducted in this area. Furthermore, there have been suggestions from Day (2000) and Kempster (2006), to extend comprehension of contextual leadership development and observational learning through investigating lived experience and how this subsequently connects to leadership identity development (Miscenko et al., 2017) and increased leadership effectiveness (Day & Sin, 2011).

This study therefore sought to respond to the following main research question:

> What can be learnt from the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers which can inspire and support aspirant female headteachers to become leaders?

Four interconnecting concepts of leadership, identity, values and gender were explored in

the literature review. Four research sub-questions were created in order to answer the overarching main research question which were based on the overlapping conceptual and theoretical framework. These were:

1. What are the professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher?

2. How do the participants construct their leadership identity?

3. How do values shape their leadership identity?

4. How have the gendered lived experiences of the participants influenced their developing leadership identity?

The data for this qualitative study were collected from October 2020 through to February 2021 from narrative interviews and a pre-interview task requesting the participants to create a River of Life describing their career journey to headship. The data from the interviews were analysed inductively, reflectively and iteratively through using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step reflexive thematic analysis and four findings chapters summarised the key themes which emerged from this analysis.

Henceforth, this chapter will look at each research sub-question in turn, relating the findings to the conceptual and theoretical framework in an interweaving way.

8.2 The professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher

Understanding the gendered career experiences of women in this role is vital if it is to aid the advancement of women in the educational sector, particularly because it is has been suggested that women could have a different career trajectory than their male counterparts (Eckman, 2004), which might be a contributing factor to the relative absence of female

secondary school headteachers. Thus, the first research sub-question sought to provide rich insight into what guided and supported the participants to the role. The data analysis grouped the professional experiences of the women into three key themes which were early career, mid-career and senior career.

8.2.1 Early career experiences

In the early career part of the women's professional trajectory, the findings from the data analysis showed that early career opportunities exposed the women to the profession both socially and culturally. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that social identity relates to how an individual feels based on the group they belong to. This study provides insight into how its participants sought that sense of belonging at the nascent stage of their career, citing examples of successfully overcoming moments of challenge in the classroom and establishing foundations on which to build and sustain resilience relating to the validation received from notable people. Consistent with the theory of Kempster (2006), the women were highly reflective of the people around them at this stage of their career and notable people were university lecturers or middle leaders. The women demonstrated a strong identity to their subject discipline and a desire to achieve mastery in teaching (Goffman, 1963). Early opportunities in leadership gave the women a chance to lead mini-projects and to experience leadership of others on a wider scale (Marchiondo et al., 2015). These opportunities appeared to be memorable to the women and as a consequence have remained salient as part of their later leadership development strategy of others (Kempster, 2006). Further, these early opportunities reflect the ideas from Komives et al. (2005) who state that when leaders develop their identities, they experience a period of 'trying out' leadership (Komives et al., 2005) in a variety of different ways with various groups of people. The enjoyment and trepidation coming from early leadership was prominent from the women and also led to *'epiphany' (Tamsin)* moments of wanting to become future leaders and more involved in the strategic educational landscape of the school. Interestingly, building on the research on critical incidents (Cope & Watts, 2000; Kempster, 2006), pivotal learning episodes in these women's professional trajectories were often more like moments of epiphany as defined by Gary and Chambers (2021) "moments when an insight or revelation captures our attention and summons us to become a better

version of ourselves" (p.371). Indeed, these epiphany moments in the women's career trajectories seemed to relate to experiencing emotion as a follower, based on the actions of the leader, which in turn led to the women reflecting on their future leader identity.

8.2.3 Mid-career experiences

The findings of this study showed that the mid-career stage of the women's professional journey seemed to be the most complex in developing leadership identity. This result echoes the work of Komives et al. (2009) who suggest that the middle stages of an individual's leadership identity development are compounded due to the conscious shift in the way people perceive leadership. This acute learning in this current study appeared to connect to an increase in leadership opportunity, new leadership experiences and an increased awareness of the impact of social influence (Schoen, 1983; Eraut, 2000). As a consequence, there was also an increase in higher stakes challenge which led the women to reflect on their personal responses to new or unexpected challenges. The women cited how in this middle stage of their careers, they had been advised by notable people such as previous headteachers or heads of department on how to implement change or instill ethos in a school through the use of rhetoric (Kempster, 2006). Hence, the notable people were key influencers in developing leadership skills which remained salient to the women and contributed to building the confidence needed to lead change. Consistent with the leadership identity development model proposed by Komives et al. (2009), the women also seemed to move from seeing leadership as positional to non-positional at this stage. Further, through being encouraged to problem solve by notable people, the women reflected on the need to become more independent leaders, which again, developed confidence and resilience.

Prior studies have shown that people emerge into leaders most effectively when a group of people invest in the growth and advancement of a potential leader (McKillop & Moorosi, 2017), a proposal which is important when exploring the career experiences of women because aspirant female leaders can face structural barriers in organisations such as through exclusion for being female or through the absence of notable people (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). As a consequence, working within a network of people can provide wider

developmental assistance and a constellation of developmental relationships (Brue & Brue, 2018). Indeed, the findings of this study help us to understand how this might happen in practice. The stories of the women's mid-careers showed how they were continually broadening the range of people they were working with, although interestingly, one finding was that these networks were mostly from within their schools. Notably, the women did not talk about the role of formal professional development in becoming a headteacher although this finding should be approached with caution because this was not a line of enquiry in the interview. Similar to the findings from Lynch (2021), who explored the career journeys from primary deputy or assistant headteachers, formal professional development courses, for example, the NPQH, do not seem to have acted as a lever to headship for the participants in this study. Rather, informal and situated professional development (Kempster, 2006) seems to have had greater impact on the development of leadership skills, leadership confidence and consequently to a salient leader identity.

At the mid-career point of the women's professional experiences, there was also an element of vulnerability within the women due to the emotions they were experiencing from responding to new or unexpected challenges. Studies by Hogg et al. (2017), highlight how emotions have not been extensively explored in the context of social learning theory and within these findings, investing time in reflecting on emotion management during the mid-career point of a career trajectory emerged as a key sub-theme. Most of the women narrated times when they had experienced emotion either from others or within themselves and how their responses had impacted on the development of their identity and decision-making. This result echoes the view of Rodgers and Scott (2008), which is that individuals form their identities through relationships and that identities constantly shift as they are affected by emotions. As the women approached senior leadership and applied for promotions, the participants sometimes experienced knockbacks, particularly at interviews, and the common thread between the women in this study is that they did not let these setbacks deter them. Hence, an important finding from this study in response to the overarching research question, is that the paths to headship for these participants were not always smooth. Instead, the women saw critical episodes as moments to evaluate and move forward (Rae & Carswell, 2001; Cliffe, 2016). Anger was a key emotion which some of the women experienced at the point of failure, although the women appeared to turn this

anger into determination and even became enlightened as to what they wanted to achieve next (Cliffe, 2016). Interestingly, the role of meritocracy in advancing to leadership emerged as a sub-theme and a possible cause of personal reflection for some of the women. According to Sealey (2010), women are often committed to meritocracy, particularly when it relates to promotion or selection. Some of the personal responses experienced by the women in this current study appeared to arise from an inner feeling that they had already proved their worthiness of the role, suggesting a possible lack of confidence in the selection process, either procedurally or personally, worthy of future research. Son Hing et al. (2002) define meritocracy as "a principle or ideal that prescribes that only the most deserved are rewarded. As such, meritocracy can operate accurately only in an unbiased system" (p.494).

How to effectively influence others in order to achieve success, was also a prominent finding within the mid-career stage. Some of the women described how in this period of middle leadership, they were leading people who they felt were individualistic and were impacting negatively on the team performance they were trying to achieve. Changing these individual attitudes was a key leadership task for some of the women, which often came at a point of transition to a new leadership role and increased responsibility. Consistent with the theory from Ibarra et al. (1999), the women's identities in new environments appeared to feel insecure or fragmented, because the women were often adapting to new responsibilities. As a result, the women appeared to look back to a past self when their identity was more stable, for example, focusing on teacher mastery. Or, the women relied on advice provided to them from notable people about how to lead and prepare for change. Therefore, this finding supports the theory that because identities are transient and changing, gaps in the identity development of an individual can appear at the point of transition which in turn can threaten a person's identity (Murakami & Toernsen, 2017), leading to uncertainty and a dip in confidence within the individual. The experiences of the participants in this study might explain what this could look like in the context of female secondary school headteachers and help to understand why females might not apply for leadership roles. Yet also, the findings provide knowledge on how to mitigate against this uncertainty.

8.2.3 Senior career experiences

During the more senior stage of their careers, the women showed how they seemed more comfortable with 'letting go' of leadership and that they were more confident in their leader identities (Komives et al., 2005; 2006). The two themes which emerged from the data analysis for this part of their career trajectories were that the women further developed their leadership identities through having positive and negative experiences as senior leaders and also that there were common influences between the women as to why they became headteachers.

At senior leadership level, the women expressed a happiness and calmness with the role. They viewed the school as a community and felt comfortable with the relationships they had created. The women appreciated opportunities to develop a broad portfolio of responsibilities across the school so that they developed their knowledge of all aspects of the role of a headteacher which in turn developed their confidence. The women felt trusted by the headteacher they were working with and also the staff, able to enact change and have impact and autonomy, similar to the findings from Smith (2011) and the Bonders from Bruce-Golding's study (2019). A few of the women experienced negative occurrences and these were often related to challenges with leading others, yet overcoming these challenges led to greater sense of self-actualisation and confidence. These findings reflect the research from Guihen (2017), who cites that deputy headteachers are more likely to become headteachers if they see the role as an opportunity to change lives, although Guihen (2017) also states that deputy headteachers see the role of a headteacher as precarious. This did not appear to be the perspectives of the women in this study. Weiner and Burton (2016) posit that the headteachers in their study were told to downplay characteristics such as warmth and emotion and again, this current study claims that this is not the case for this sample of female secondary school headteachers. In fact, this study claims that the 'calm' experiences of deputy headship and the support offered to the women by their headteacher at the time has supported and guided them to headship along with a belief in showing professional warmth for the pupils in their schools (Smith, 2011).

Indeed, when the women talked about applying for headship, they described how they felt they had established strong groups of people around them and it appeared that the headteacher had become the main meaning maker, acting as the key influence behind the

women's decision to become a headteacher (McKillop & Moorosi, 2017). This finding accords with the findings from Lynch (2021) who discovered that a positive relationship between the deputy or assistant headteacher with the headteacher was significant in a women's leader identity development and advancement to headship. These reflections from the women also match the findings from Bruce-Golding (2019), with the women in this current study seeming to have the most similarities with the 'Bridgers' in Bruce-Golding's study (2019), because they expressed close working relationships with their headteachers, recounting how their headteacher had given them the final push to apply for the role of headteacher. The findings were also in line with those of Oplatka and Tamir (2009) who, after researching twenty-five female deputy headteachers in Israel, revealed that most female headteachers either wait until they are asked to do the job, or want to do it from entry into the career. Only one woman in this current study described how she had always wanted to be a headteacher, whilst the others acknowledged that their professional journey to headship had not been planned, consistent with the ideas from Eckman (2004). As per the findings from Lynch (2021), one unanticipated finding was that the gender of the headteacher did not indicate a negative impact on the women unlike suggestions from the literature from Coleman (2007). Instead, the ability of the headteacher to act as a role model through being passionate and fair was more prominent than their gender. As a consequence, a key finding from this study is that headteachers play a prominent part in the move to secondary school headship and in helping potential female headteachers to see themselves in the role. Indeed, most of the women in this study appeared to not have seen themselves as future headteachers without some form of validation or change in circumstances, which raises the question as to whether potential future female leaders should be encouraged sooner to consider the role.

Overall, this exploration into the women's professional lived experiences has provided insight into how leadership identities of female secondary school headteachers can develop over time, identifying alignment to some models of leadership identity development. One example of alignment is to Dahlvig and Longman (2014) who created a Women's Leadership Development Model based on the findings from interviews with aspiring female leaders from the North American Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. This model proposed that women move through stages when becoming leaders, starting with being

motivated to lead, through to building leadership self-efficacy to having leadership experiences, then to being leadership competent. Indeed, this current study found that the women moved through these four stages and that their senior career experiences highlighted their competence and confidence in themselves and their leadership through their way of viewing a school as a collective whole or as the *'panacea' (Tamsin)*. The career trajectories of the women in this study also align with the leadership identity development model from Komives et al. (2005), because the women appeared to begin their leadership identity development by seeing leadership as leader-centric to viewing leadership as systems, endorsed by transcendental aims. Furthermore, Moorosi (2010) describes how leaders go through a three-step process from "anticipation" to "acquisition" to "performance" (p.547). These phases were reflected in the leader identity development of the women in this study too, because they first gained knowledge about the role, then started to embed the skills for senior leadership. The women then moved to headship and continued to reflect on their careers beyond. Therefore, this current study extends our understanding of how women develop their leadership identities over time, providing insight into how models from a different context could potentially be applied to support the leader identity development of aspirant female secondary school headteachers in England.

8.3 The construction of their leadership identity

This part of the chapter addresses the findings from the second research sub-question which examined how the women construct their leadership identity. From the data analysis, three key themes were generated by the researcher for this research sub-question, which were that the women constructed their leadership identity through broadcasting their leadership, enacting leadership and through managing the multiple self.

8.3.1 Broadcasting leadership

Communication was paramount to the way in which the participants constructed their leadership identity within the school community, because the women felt that effective communication enabled them to publicly inform people of who they are and what they stand for as a leader, helping to foster partnership and collegiality. This finding is consistent

with social identity theory of leadership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), in that it demonstrates the women's aim to create a shared social identity and to establish a feeling of togetherness. The finding also demonstrates how leaders are able to shape this reality and determine its nature and trajectory through the power of talk and performance (Reicher et al., 2018). The participants cited how they use every opportunity to talk about their vision for the school and its ethos, a communication which was strategic and performative in nature, hence developing a "norm talk" (Hogg et al., 2012, p.263). Norm talk pervades when a group prototype has been created by a leader and people within the group have transformed to take on the attributes of the constructed social group. This finding also resonates with the research from DeRue and Ashford (2010) who propose that leadership identity is a co-construction from social interaction within an organisation and the women seemingly used communication of their vision for the school to develop a dynamic interaction between leaders and followers. Furthermore, the women believed in being as open as possible about their school culture. Eagly (2005) suggests that questions exist about the extent to which followers understand their leaders' strategic vision and values and although this study does not explore leadership from the followers' perspective, it would seem from the women's narratives that the women were continually thoughtful of how followers might interpret their leadership identity. Indeed, contrary to the work of Eagly (2005), which asserts that female leaders can be seen as outsiders and thus find it more difficult to secure the trust of their followers and legitimacy as the spokesperson for the community, the participants in this study seemed to be achieving the opposite. In fact, these women appeared to construct a leader identity of being true to themselves which in turn, seemed to help them to broadcast their vision with a view to increasing followership through being honest and authentic through their talk. Broadcasting their leadership identity through assemblies, staff meetings, email, website or parents' evenings enabled the promotion of key elements of their leader identities such as committing to personal values, envisioning and strategically planning the sustainment of their organisation, taking responsibility for the promotion and leadership development of teams and individuals (Komives et al., 2006).

8.3.2 Enabling leadership

The importance of being seen to be a leader who enabled leadership within the school was visible when the participants talked about leading and developing their staff or creating conditions conducive to growth and learning, reinforcing a culture of leadership which depends on teams of leaders (Spillane, 2005) and a focus on understanding one's followers in order to enhance efficacy of leadership (Felfe & Schyns, 2010). Indeed, establishing strong working conditions was important to the women and they explained how it helped to retain staff and develop interdependency between teams of people. Some of the women talked about how they even wanted to *'serve' (Tamsin)* their staff which showed their level of confidence and a conscious shift from seeing leadership as positional to non-positional (Komives et al., 2006). When talking about how they enact their leadership identity, the women were also open about not always having all the answers and how they encouraged a group approach to problem-solving, notably with all stakeholders, including governors. Plus, the women discussed how they coach others and devolve responsibility, creating a risk-averse environment. The participants expressed a strong will to sustain their organisation and expressed pride in how loyal they felt their staff were and how they wanted to equip their staff to be the best they can be. These findings support the position of Ford (2010) in that the women described how they were comfortable with a more sub-ordinated position of leadership as they actively wanted their followers to lead. These women saw their role as the *'anchor' (Laine)* of the school, they did not see themselves as superhuman or alienated, a finding inconsistent with research from Ford (2010). Indeed, their leadership identity seemed to be connected to observing and fostering success in others.

In addition to this approach, the women's leadership identity was also constructed in the way they enacted leadership to lead the myriad of teams within their school community. The women conveyed a dedication to the empowerment of others and encouraging risk so that staff in particular, would be able to grow, explore and innovate. Thus, the leadership identity of these women did seem to be connected to gendered ways of leading cited in the literature review (Fletcher, 2004) through acting empathically and collaboratively. However, the women did not advocate leading through aligning themselves with stereotypical male behaviours (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and appeared comfortable with

claiming leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Yet, their identity as leaders was arguably linked to embracing and creating a shared community, akin to an extended family.

Social identity theory proposes that individuals often adopt one of three identity management approaches if they feel they have an unfavourable social identity which are: individual mobility, social competition and social creativity (Tajfel, 1982). The literature review also proposed that there has not been an abundance of research exploring these approaches (Scheifele et al., 2019). The findings of this current study show that these women are impacting positively on the values associated with women as a social identity in education. Furthermore, that the boundaries of their social group (gender) are permeable if women create prototypical values. Yet, in contrast to Hogg et al. (2012), these women do not appear to foster depersonalisation so that everybody embodies a group prototype, instead diversity of opinion is valued and the women lead with a "superordinate identity" (Hogg et al., 2017, p.573). Indeed, these leaders expressed a will to achieve simultaneous unity and diversity of opinion when they spoke about leading their senior leadership teams. Moreover, they invite feedback from all stakeholders within the school community, giving insight into the complexity of leading people. A prominent point in social identity theory of leadership is that leaders who are prototypical encourage the value of trust which in turn increases the salience of the group. Indeed, for the women in this research, achieving trust was a major aim because they portrayed trust as instrumental in helping to resolve social dilemmas and transform individual aims into group objectives.

8.3.3 The multiple self

The final sub-theme which emerged within the theme of identity construction is how the women identified and managed the many identities contributing to their leadership identity construction. The women were very aware of the many identities they held, such as teacher, mother, wife, friend, daughter, leader, yet appeared to embody an element of tranquil congruence between these identities, particularly later in their careers. The women did not claim to act as different people but instead felt they had different variables of themselves as a leader so that they were able to be a different leader for a different purpose but not a different person. Role models played a key part in this identity visioning

because the women were constantly reflecting on how they were reacting to the actions of others and the emotions these actions caused (Gibson, 2004). With regards to group influences the women also showed how they saw the complexity of their identity within their context, for example, sometimes they were the teacher and sometimes the headteacher and articulated how this might cause confusion or tension for others, more than for themselves (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012). Interestingly, there were examples in the data of how the women lacked confidence in their identity as a headteacher when they transitioned to the role but then grew in confidence so the *'mask' (Margaret)* disappeared, consistent with the findings from McKillop and Moorosi (2017) and their proposal of an incumbency period when moving to headship. One unanticipated finding was that as headteachers, the women were conscious of the different identities they took on but were confident in moving between these identities, almost as if they had become skilled and confident in playing with possible selves and doing identity work (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). Hence, the ability of the women to regulate their identities and to see themselves as leaders rather than potential leaders was evident. Moreover, the women did not seem to have fragmented identities, which Lynch (2021) found existed in the deputy and assistant primary headteachers in her study, potentially because the women in this current study are existing headteachers and have been through a stage of incumbency (McKillop & Moorosi, 2017) and identity play (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012). However, it should be restated, that the data highlighted how some of the women did not see themselves as headteachers until encouraged to by their own headteacher.

The interviews demonstrated that the women seemed to continually reflect on their identities, particularly as to how others might see them. Hence, they seemed to think about how they could remain effective in the various roles they have, reflecting the identity work defined by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003). Some of the women even described how their leadership identity and personal identity had become very aligned using words such as *'wedded' (Margaret)* and *'morphed' (Ann)* so that the school was an extension of who they were. This finding aligns to the views of Blose (2022), who suggests that personal and professional identities do entangle and shape each other. It also supports evidence from Swann Jr. and Buhrmester (2014) who refer to a person's visceral togetherness with a group as identity fusion, explaining that people who are strongly fused see other members of the

group like family. A person who is strongly fused maintains their personal agency and aligns to the collective group goals at the same time. Further, people who are strongly fused are known to care for individuals as well as the more abstract wider group of people which are characteristics seen as part of the leadership philosophies in the next section of this chapter. The women in this study appeared to achieve this fusion of personal and professional identity through their values and acknowledged that as people, they could be very different at home and at school. This was not a difference that seemed to cause discomfort to them, although they cited examples of how others might react to their leader identity through being deferential, for example.

One unanticipated finding which connects to the concept of identity is that some of the women talked about how they have consciously physically embodied the persona of a headteacher, almost as if they dress to satisfy the perceptions others may have of what a headteacher should look like. Although their research was taken from the context of Higher Education, Ford et al. (2017) sought to understand more about how leaders are evaluated materialistically and how they work on embodying their appearance in what Ford et al. (2017) refer to as "leadersuitmirrorhair" (p.1556). In accordance with the research from Ford et al. (2017), the participants in this contextual study chose an image of their self to reflect their excellence in leadership. Thus, providing insight into how individuals might oscillate between who they are and what others think of them and what they think they should look like (Goffman, 1963). Ford et al. (2017) propose the theory that "others' leadership qualities can be read off from how they look; one's own physical presentation therefore must represent one's own leadership abilities" (p.1564).

Furthermore, Ford et al. (2017) understood the participants in their study to be actors with agency who perform as leaders in a material way and who turn themselves into what they think leaders should look like. Indeed, the finding in this current study relates to the views of Petriglieri and Stein (2012) too, who cite that followers expect the leader to embody the views of their group into the headteacher's leadership identity. This was an interesting finding and suggests that there could be a prototypical view of what a female secondary school headteacher looks like, which could be a factor impacting on the relative absence of female secondary school headteachers. This view also corroborates the work of Goffman

(1963) who posits that all roles in society have expectations which role-holders adhere to and also to Ladkin and Taylor (2010) who posit the importance of values transmitted through somatic clues.

8.4 How values shape their leadership identity

This third research sub-question brought together the findings related to how values shape the leadership identity of the participants. The findings of this study showed that the women's leadership identities were built on the espoused values they hold as both people and as leaders, as per the ideas of Kafa and Pashiardis (2020). All the women shared the same core value in their roles, which was to place the young person at the centre of the decision-making of the school, consistent with the research from Day (2004) but in contrast to the external pressures a school may face from performativity, which Ball (2003) cites as potentially overpowering. Indeed, although academic outcomes were of importance to the women, they communicated that it was important to them that the young person was happy and inspired (Warwas, 2014). Therefore, the leadership identity of the women was shaped by three leadership philosophies based on groupings of values which were leading with professional love, championing inclusion and advocating trust. The warmth associated with these philosophies was an unexpected finding, even though it was anticipated that passion and a values-led approach would emerge as themes (Day, 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Two additional themes were also revealed which grouped the findings relating to: obstacles in the way of embedding leadership philosophies and the data relating to the origins of the women's values.

8.4.1 Leading with professional love

The value of leading with professional love referred to how the women ensured there was a culture of high expectation, care and aspiration for the children. In a couple of cases which were communicated in the interview, this aim was encapsulated in the school vision of transforming lives and achieving excellence. The women demonstrated a determination to not settle for anything less than what was best for the child and wanted to look after the people of their school in a familial way, supporting ideas from Maniero and Sullivan (2005).

This approach underpins a broadening view of leadership as stipulated by Komives et al. (2006) and the thoughts of Pansiri (2008), in that educational leaders tend to use the needs of the learner to drive the school's vision and develop teams to enact this mission. It also provides insight into how as leaders, the women anchor a shared sense of belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The philosophy also reflects the research on female deputy headteachers from Guihen (2017), who discovered that if the role of headship was seen to be influential in changing the lives of others, then it was perceived to be more attractive. In the data regarding this theme, it also seemed that the women had a passion for their job and that there was not a tension in the way they wanted to lead and how the leadership of the role was perceived. This is in contrast to the findings from Oplatka and Tamir (2009) who discovered that females do not want to become headteachers because they think the role is not compatible with a female deputy's life and personality and that the role of a headteacher is about administration and alienation. In fact, one of these headteachers felt they were *'never alone' (Tamsin).*

8.4.2 Championing inclusion

Leading by championing inclusion referred to how the women aimed to consider all children's needs and how they were committed to creating an atmosphere where everybody, staff and pupils, felt a sense of belonging and thus happiness. This philosophy mirrors "developing the self" in stage six of the leadership identity development model from Komives et al. (2005, p.599), because the women were conscious to model and articulate this transcendental philosophy to the staff so that it cascaded throughout the organisation. As discussed, academic achievement was celebrated for all by the women but was not the ultimate endgame of the school, an unanticipated finding which contradicts the research from Ball (2003) of the teaching profession being a culture of performativity. Indeed, the women did not portray the sense that they were technologically data-driven or that an emphasis on academic outcomes has impacted negatively on the soul of their teachers, taking away time for creativity and forming an atmosphere of confused values. Fuller (2019) also referred to an apparent gap between the values espoused by school leaders, educational philosophy, professionalism and the reforms being imposed by external bodies. In the realms of this study, it would appear that these participants have learnt to manage

this proposed dichotomy of values and performativity and achieve congruence as per the ideas from Ladkin and Taylor (2010). The findings suggest that the women have developed the confidence to balance Ball's (2003) terrors of performativity and have overcome the "values schizophrenia" (p.221) which might exist when teachers are split between wanting to be authentic and committed to their students rather than attain for the sake of performance-related goals.

8.4.3 Advocating trust

Leading through advocating trust refers to how the women felt they built and managed the relationships needed to achieve the aims of the school. This theme connects closely to the findings from the second research sub-question on identity construction, which explained how the women enable leadership and create a social identity through establishing trust. The current study proposes that the participants aim to model trust along with integrity, honesty and transparency so that it permeates throughout their school, a finding consistent with the research on social identity of leadership (Hogg et al., 2012), who state that trust can increase the salience of a group. The women in this study explained that being seen to be trustworthy increases the chances of being valued and to be seen as credible leaders. Furthermore, the women had invested in building trust to ensure group dilemmas were resolved harmoniously and in the best interests of the shared goal, namely the care for the child. These attitudes of the women showed how they were leading in line with the Headteachers' standards (DfE, 2020) and provides insight into the connection and power between trust and leadership.

8.4.4 Reflecting on formative and early career experiences

From analysing the narratives of the women, it would seem that the values the women advocated may have originally stemmed from their formative experiences, becoming more prominent as the women progressed through their careers and developed their identities, thus espoused rather than created in-action (Kafa & Pashiardis, 2020). During the interviews, the women sometimes talked about their formative experiences before they became teachers and through verbally looking back, the women articulated where some of

their values had come from. This finding was consistent with the participants' experiences from Kempster's (2006) study in which the research interview process acted as a catalyst to identifying where influences had happened. For example, in this current study, the participants gave examples about how they could see that many children had suffered from poor education when they were at school, or that they had been personally restrained from experiencing risk and creativity. Indeed, these women have enabled their self to triumph over this tension through reflecting on their own experiences, early values and developing assured leadership philosophies which aids the confidence they have in their leadership identity (Hanold, 2017). This finding carries importance for potential professional development opportunities as an outcome of this study because reflecting on formative experiences and the types of values experienced at that stage can help an individual to cement or question their own leadership philosophy and in turn, add to the confidence of a leader (Komives et al., 2006).

8.4.5 Barriers to applying the philosophies

However, from analysis of the data, it also became apparent that there were a number of factors acting as a barrier to the fulsome embedding of their leadership philosophies within the school which threatened their leader identities. As headteachers, these women are responsible for budgets, recruitment, marketing, estates, academic outcomes, adherence to policies, high expectations in teaching and learning and the general smooth running of day-to-day school life (DfE, 2020). The obstacles raised by the women were mostly financial in nature and reflected the tensions from performativity cited by Ball (2003) and Fuller (2019). Although the barriers the women referred to did not appear to remove their soul as such (Ball, 2003), they did seem to create a wall to achieving a vision, or influence the reasoning behind some of the actions these headteachers have needed to take. It was suggested by one of the participants, which endorses the work of Ball (2003), that making decisions based on finance can confuse values and incite cynicism from followers.

A noticeable finding from the data analysis, was that gender did not appear to be a barrier in embedding the women's leadership values. The participants in this study seem to have smashed through the glass ceiling and not been put into the role according to the glass cliff

analogy (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Moreover, the women appear to lead through the enactment of their values, similar to the participants in Smith's (2011) study who lead through being tough but caring, relational, supportive, emotionally rational and aware of their well-being. Further, these values have become arguably more embedded in the women's leadership identity over time.

8.5 How gendered lived experiences have influenced their leadership identity

The fourth research sub-question sought to provide insight into how gendered lived experiences have influenced the developing leadership identities of the participants. From the analysis of the data, four themes emerged which were namely: females as role models, the role of confidence, perceptions of female educational leadership and perceptions of societal challenges (and potential solutions) for aspirant female headteachers.

8.5.1 Female role modelling

The findings indicated that the women were conscious that as headteachers, they were serving as role models to females within their schools and even in the wider sector. A few of the women also acknowledged that when they started in the profession that the number of female role models was much lower and were cognisant of how this had impacted negatively on them. As a result, consistent with the literature (Gibson, 2004; Weaver et al., 2005), as female secondary school headteachers, the women expressed a realisation that they are acting as role models and impacting positively on the future recruitment of female senior leaders.

The findings also highlighted how these women strive for a superordinate leadership identity as proposed by Hogg et al. (2017) because they embrace the distinctiveness of people and do not want to negatively reject people from perceived outgroups entering their ingroup. These leaders were conscious that they have appealed to women who identify with them but that this did not solve a wider problem of diversity amongst headteachers. The tension these leaders face is that they wanted to ensure their ingroup identity was as salient as possible in order to fulfil the aims of the school, yet were aware that more work

needed to be done on how to encourage more cross-categorisation. Although this finding helps us to understand the nature of role-modelling, it does not offer a solution to increasing a more diverse workforce wider than the concerns regarding gender and will therefore form the basis of recommendation for future research.

8.5.2 The role of confidence

Some of the participants spoke about how they struggle with and overcome daily imposter syndrome. However, the women participating in this research appeared to have learned how to cope with this continual battle with confidence which in turn has positive implications for professional training recommendations emerging from this study. In fact, confidence was a key part of having a salient and congruent leader identity. Examples of how women can experience a lack of confidence related to public speaking or *'wanting to tie the bow' (Morwenna),* thus wanting to be experts in all aspects of the role before applying which has implications for the outcome of this study. The women also spoke about how senior leaders often see the jeopardy of the role, particularly the nearer they approach it, which is consistent with the findings from Guihen (2017). The participants in Guihen's research (2017) saw headship as a precarious position and less stable than deputy headship because they could see first-hand the pressures of working at that level. Furthermore, there was one example of observed Queen-bee behaviours in female headship, which arguably might therefore exist in the educational work space. Yet, in this current study, examples of how to overcome a lack of confidence in being able to do the role were given, such as being exposed to all aspects of the job and experiencing a positive relationship with the headteacher.

8.5.3 Perceptions of female educational leadership

Additionally, the women also cited examples of how they felt more conscious of their gender now that they are headteachers and especially when they went through the interview process, citing examples of being asked about managing their workload and pupil behaviour. This is consistent with the research from Fuller (2013), who found that women in educational leadership in England can still be impacted negatively by stereotyping and

factors which are cultural, societal or even discriminatory in nature. Therefore, this current study proposes there is still bias towards women that exists in institutions and in our wider society which can impact negatively on female leadership identity development (Ibarra et al., 2013). Consistent with the literature (Roberts & Brown, 2019, p.84), there was also evidence from one of the women's story of how headship networks can potentially be perceived as *'boys clubs' (Ann).*

8.5.4 Perceptions of challenges in society for aspiring female headteachers

Interestingly, the women gave some revealing perceptions and innovative ideas as to how they might increase the number of females into the role. Notably, these women thought that balancing the role with the demands of being a mother was challenging for women and that society almost expects the working female to do this as a rule of thumb, providing insight into how the construct of gender may present itself in contemporary society (Bradley, 2013). The women also cited examples of how education can be seen to be inflexible due to working hours and lack of creative use of technology. Thus, there was a concern which emerged from these leaders that the sector needs to adapt if it is to recruit more diversity to its workforce and leadership. There was evidence from the women of how they are in the position to act as trailblazers in the sector to increase accessibility to the field, as well as headship. The women spoke avidly about how they knew they had increased the number of females on their senior leadership teams but were aware that they were recruiting people like them which is not helping to increase diversity or ethnicity in the sector, thus they were aware of their positioning as female role models (Bandura, 1977; 1986; Gibson, 2004). This rings true with Kempster (2006), who suggests, that the more diverse the notable people are, the richer the skills in leadership, potentially significant for this study where there is a lack of diversity at the top of the profession. Indeed, Ely et al. (2011) describe how as women rise to leadership positions, the number of women decreases which in turn leads to women becoming more visible and more subjected to scrutiny. However, the women's stories in this study did not appear to support the suggestion that they felt more subjected to scrutiny as women once in post, although the data did imply agreement that visible female leaders empower others to apply for the role as per a ripple effect.

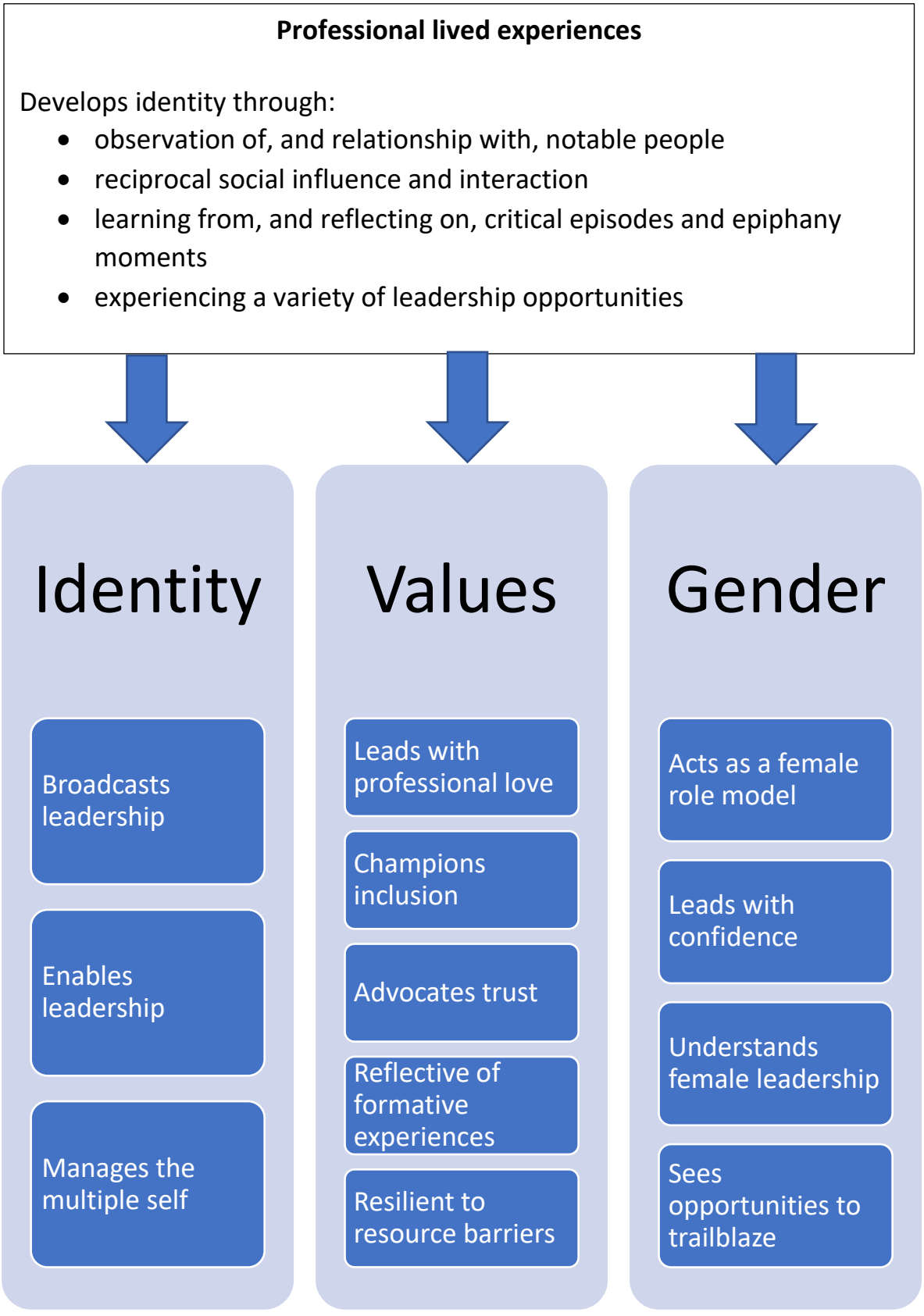
8.6 A theoretical contribution

This final section of this chapter draws together the main points arising from the discussion and highlights the theoretical contributions emerging from this study in relation to leadership identity development of female secondary school headteachers.

The theoretical contribution to knowledge is shown in Figure 8.1 below and brings together the main findings from the discussion of the findings with a following explanation:

Figure 8.1:

Figure showing the aspects of leadership identity development of a female secondary school headteacher



How the participants develop their leadership identities over time is described in the top box and these are the themes which emerged from exploring the professional lived experiences of the women (chapter 4). The women appeared to develop their leadership identities through observation of notable people and through their relationships with notable people. They developed their leadership identities through reciprocal social influence and interaction and also through learning from, and reflecting on, critical episodes and epiphany moments. Finally, the women developed their leadership identities through experiencing a range of leadership opportunities.

Underneath this box are the key findings from the conceptual framework, identity (chapter 5), values (chapter 6) and gender (chapter 7). Together, these themes depict the key aspects of a female secondary school headteacher's leadership identity development. The arrows show the relationship between how the women develop their leadership identities over time and signify that these are key factors in how the women develop their leadership identities according to identity, values and gender.

Overall, the findings of this study show that the leadership identities of female secondary school headteachers develop over time through a process of reflection. This reflection which can be in-action (Schoen, 1983) but also retrospective (Kempster, 2006). The reflection and circle encourages a deeper self-awareness and sense of self-discovery to enhance feelings of authenticity in the leader (Karp & Helgo, 2008; Brue & Brue, 2018). Development of the leader identity occurs through continual social interaction in an experiential way, whereby the leader constantly reflects and learns from critical and epiphany moments and notable people in the form of role models. According to this current study, a female secondary school headteacher can achieve a salient leader identity through focusing on how they broadcast who they are, how they lead their teams and how they manage their multiple identities to portray confidence in their leadership and to inspire group membership (Hogg et al., 2001). By leading with embedded values of professional love, inclusion and trust, a female secondary school headteacher does not need to ascribe to a stereotypical male manner of leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002), instead, they can lead through the power of the shared social values of the group which helps to balance imposed educational demands. As a consequence, a female secondary school headteacher can enact

a more authentic and gendered post-heroic way of leading (Fletcher, 2004) which facilitates delegation and empowers leaders throughout the institution. As *'anchors' (Laine)* in the sector, female secondary school headteachers are able to act as role models and *'trailblazers' (Molly),* particularly in promoting social injustice, understanding the barriers women face to advancement. Furthermore, this figure can be implemented with existing models of leadership identity development such as Komives et al., (2005) which can aid as a structure to acquire or evaluate the salience of these individual components.

8.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has outlined a discussion of the findings, connecting them to the literature referred to in chapter two and the theoretical and conceptual framework of the research.

Key findings from the data analysis have shown that the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers develop leadership identities over time and through distinct phases. The women were influenced by informal experiences including social interaction with notable people. Headteachers were the most prominent notable people in the stories from the women and had the most impact in encouraging the women to apply for headship. The women learnt to regulate their identities over time so that at headteacher level they were engaged in identity fusion with their schools through their core sense of purpose. The leadership identities of the women were based on values which in turn led them to lead in a manner which was authentic to them. Gender has not been an overt obstacle to career advancement although some examples of discriminatory behaviour at interviews were cited. Following this discussion chapter, chapter nine will present the conclusion to this study, highlighting its original contribution to knowledge and recommendations for future leadership development and research.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction to the chapter

This study has explored the development of the leadership identities of female secondary school headteachers through examining their professional lived experiences in order to answer the original over-arching research question:

> What can be learnt from the professional lived experiences of female secondary school headteachers which can inspire and support aspirant female headteachers to become leaders?

This chapter, which serves as a conclusion to this thesis, will be divided into seven key parts. Following this introduction, the study will be summarised and outline the key findings from each of the research sub-questions. The limitations of the study will then be highlighted, followed by the study's original contributions to knowledge. Next, implications and recommendations for educational policy and practice will be described. The chapter will then demonstrate ideas for future research in this field which relate to the outcomes of this study. The final parts of the chapter will outline the reflections of the researcher on engaging with this doctoral study, moving lastly to a summary to the whole thesis and concluding remarks.

9.2 Summary of the study

The justification of the main research question emerged from the current under-representation of female secondary school headteachers, despite education being a female dominated sector. Scholars cite that more research is needed to help us to better understand the career trajectories of women in educational leadership, particularly as it is likely that they may have a different career path to men (Eckman, 2004), whilst Fuller (2013)

draws attention to the lack of writing on female secondary school headteachers in England. Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore the professional lived experiences of women who are secondary school headteachers to find out what has guided and supported them to become headteachers. Four overlapping concepts of leadership, identity, values and gender were discussed in the context of educational leadership, with the aim of discovering what factors might be influencing the relative absence of females in the role. Theories of learning to lead through lived experience (Kempster, 2006), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and social identity of leadership (Hogg et al., 2001) underpinned the conceptual framework along with models of leadership identity development (Komives et al., 2005; Moorosi, 2010; Dahlvig & Longman, 2014). Four exploratory research sub-questions were formed after reviewing the extant literature so as to answer the main research question. Little is known about how female secondary school headteachers in England develop their leadership identity over time, how values influence their leadership or how their professional lived experiences may have been influenced by their gender. Much of the extant literature points to the barriers women face to career advancement or focuses on women in the business sector, deputy headteachers, other educational contexts, or headteachers from an international arena. Hence the research sub-questions were:

1. What are the professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher?

2. How do the participants construct their leadership identity?

3. How do values shape their leadership identity?

4. How have the gendered lived experiences of the participants influenced their developing leadership identity?

Given that this study focuses on achieving thick description from participants' narratives (Riessman, 2005; Elliott, 2022), the chosen research paradigm was interpretivist and social constructionist. The participants were asked to complete a pre-interview task of drawing a

River of Life to plot their career journeys and then the women took part in a narrative interview. The interviews were transcribed and analysed inductively, iteratively and reflexively using the six-step reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis was purposefully reflexive due to the researcher's positionality in the sector of being an insider researcher (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). Furthermore, the researcher consciously adopted a reflexive approach to the research so as to make the relationship and influence between the researcher and participants explicit (Palaganas et al., 2017), as explained in the introduction and methodology (section 1.4 and section 3.9.1).

9.3 Summary of the wider outcomes

9.3.1 The professional experiences which led the participants to become a headteacher

This study has identified that the career paths of the women can be divided into three phases, namely: early career (section 8.2.1), mid-career (section 8.2.2) and senior career (section 8.2.3). The women started their careers with trepidation and with a passion for their subject and the profession. At this stage, their teacher identities were salient and the women were seeking to become part of the social identity of the profession and to feel a sense of belonging (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The investigation showed that the women were being influenced by notable people (Kempster, 2006) and through learning from critical episodes (Rae & Carswell, 2001). At this nascent point, the women were eager to learn about leadership and took on mini whole school projects and were thus beginning to hone skills of leadership (Moorosi, 2010). The women moved quickly to middle leadership posts and were eager to try out different leadership roles (Komives et al., 2005). As the women progressed into middle leadership, they started to reflect on the role of influence and emotion because the work they were doing was more high stakes and involving more people (Cope & Watts, 2000; Marchiondo et al., 2015). When they approached senior leadership, they often experienced setbacks which although disappointing, appeared to make the women stronger and build essential leadership skills. Some of these critical episodes appeared to be more like epiphany moments of compelling insight (Gary & Chambers, 2021) strengthening the theory from Kempster (2006) as to how individuals learn

from informal experiences through reflecting on such trigger moments. As the women neared headship, they began to realise that they had the skills to be successful in the post but some of the women needed a final vote of confidence from their current headteacher to apply, a finding which raises important implications for the understanding of who and what supports women into headship (Lynch, 2021) (section 8.2.3). Hence, the stories from the women highlighted a different perspective to the reviewed literature on secondary school headship which often proposes that the role of a female headteacher is difficult to attain, not aspired to and where values become impossible to enact due to the external pressures of performativity imposed upon school leaders and women (Ball, 2003; Guihen, 2017). Indeed, the experiences of the women in this study of secondary school headship are positive as per the findings of Smith (2011).

9.3.2 How the participants construct their leadership identity

The findings of this study also extend our knowledge on how female secondary school headteachers construct their leadership identities. The most significant findings from this research sub-question were, that the women shape their identities through broadcasting their leadership (section 8.3.1), enabling their leadership (section 8.3.2) and through careful management of their multiple selves (section 8.3.3). The women's use of talk is socially constructed so that vision and ethos are strategically cascaded throughout the school to foster a feeling of togetherness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and shared reality and identity (Reicher et al., 2018). The importance of developing leadership in others was paramount (Spillane, 2005) and the women conveyed the sense that their role as a headteacher is to *'serve' (Tamsin)* their staff (Komives et al., 2006). Indeed, their leadership identities connected to support and care (Fletcher, 2004), rather than the stereotypical agentic characteristics which women have been seen to aspire to, or to be criticised for, as cited by Eagly & Karau's (2002) role congruity theory.

Another major finding was that these women have achieved identity congruence or even a form of identity fusion with who they are and how they lead their schools (Swann Jr. & Buhrmeister, 2014). It appeared that over the course of their professional careers, the

women had become skilled in identity work (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) through going through the process of playing with possible selves (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) and being influenced by role models or notable people (Bandura, 1977; Gibson, 2004). Therefore, the women in this study did not show they had fragmented identities unlike some prior studies which have explored the identities of deputy or assistant headteachers (Lynch, 2021). However, one important finding from this study is that the women did provide evidence that they were conscious of their physical identity almost as if what they wore signified the quality of their leadership (Ford et al., 2017). This "leadersuitmirrorhair" concept from Ford et al. (2017, p.1556) proposes that the women could be embodying external perceptions of what a female secondary school headteacher should look like (Goffman, 1963) which in turn could potentially be a factor which is impacting negatively on the social identity of female secondary school headteachers and the relative absence of women in the role. Also, the women did not appear to have a strong identity of their future self as a headteacher. Instead, this identity often needed validation from their headteacher when the post became available.

9.3.2 How values shape their leadership identity

From the review of the literature, the role of values emerged as a key part of headteacher leadership. Not only do values such as integrity and honesty form part of Headteacher Standards (DfE, 2020) but they have also been found to be central to leading a school (Day, 2004; Warwas, 2014). However, the research also suggests that there can be a tension in educational leadership between leading through altruistic values and leading through imposed policy and performance measures (Ball, 2003), threatening the identity of a leader. Hence, the role values play in shaping a leader's identity was investigated. The findings of this study illustrated that values form an embedded part of a leader's identity and that this identity is then based on leadership philosophies (Komives et al., 2006), namely: leading with professional love (section 8.4.1), championing inclusion (section 8.4.2) and advocating trust (section 8.4.3). This finding supports the research from Guihen (2017), who discovered that headship was more attractive if it enabled headteachers to transform lives and act altruistically. Furthermore, the stories from these women highlight how they love their jobs and how their roles are not just about administration and alienation (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009;

Smith, 2011). The women spoke about how they feel their identities are built on trust and that this trust enables their leadership because it helps to problem-solve and to establish credibility. This finding aligns to the research from Hogg et al. (2012) who cite that trust increases group salience.

Furthermore, this research provided insight into where an individual's values originate, because the women in this study recounted where they felt values such as ambition, quality education and social mobility were espoused in their formative experiences (Kafa & Pashiardis, 2010). The women's narratives extend understanding on how values extant in formative experiences become more salient over time forming the basis of leadership philosophy (section 8.4.4). This deeper understanding is worthy of further research as to how values contribute to the development of a leadership identity (Higham & Booth, 2018).

Yet, the study also unearthed significant findings on what interferes with the development of the women's leadership identities and these obstacles related to finance and resource (section 8.4.5). Although part of the job, some of the women felt that dealing with this part of the role caused tension with who they wanted to be as leaders and could incite distrust from their followers (Ball, 2003). Hence, this is a significant finding which provides important information on how aspirant headteachers might need to prepare for headship and to understand the reactions or emotions of others in change management or decision-making. Another key finding was how the women did not prioritise academic outcomes over pupil happiness and well-being with values driving the leadership of the school (Pansiri, 2008).

9.3.4 How gendered lived experiences have influenced their developing leadership identity

The ways in which gendered lived experiences have influenced the developing leadership identity of these women were complex. The women acknowledged that they were very aware that they serve as role models to aspiring female headteachers (Gibson, 2004) (section 8.5.1). On reflection, a few of the women felt that they had missed out on having female role models and that this had potentially impacted on seeing authentic emotion in the workplace. Indeed, the women recognised that they did not want to appear emotional

at school, yet there was a place for emotion, echoing leadership aligned to females in the literature (Maniero & Sullivan, 2005). A new contribution to knowledge from this current study is that the women could see that they were empowering women and increasing the number of females in their senior leadership teams. However, some of the women raised the point that they were encouraging women like them into senior roles and not yet achieving diversity. Several of the women had clearly thought about how to trailblaze this change for the future but were not sure of the next steps. Moreover, the women appeared to have a relatively deep understanding of what it is like to be an aspiring female leader and could identify the issues aspirant female headteachers might be experiencing. For example, imposter syndrome, lacking confidence in one's ability to do the role, public speaking (Cubillo & Brown, 2003) (section 8.5.2).

From the data analysis, it seemed that the women became more aware of their gender as an identity as they neared the post of headteacher and largely because they noticed comments, at interviews for example, which they perceived to be attributed to their gender (section 8.5.3). This finding corroborated evidence from published documentation which states that women in education do still experience inequity at interviews (Fuller, 2013; Ely et al., 2011; Roberts & Brown, 2019) and a "double-bind" (Weiner & Burton, 2016, p.340). Also, that a woman's gender becomes more visible as the number of females decreases (Eckman, 2004). Nevertheless, the experiences which were recounted by the women were not insurmountable, rather inspired determination or an epiphany moment of where they wanted to go next in their careers.

Furthermore, another unexpected finding was how the women expressed a desire to act as trailblazers in the profession and were deeply reflective on why there might be a relative absence of female secondary school headteachers (section 8.5.4). The women raised issues relating to workload, childcare and lack of flexibility in the sector providing insight into how the three gender inequalities, production, reproduction and consumption (Bradley, 2013) still prevail. However, these leaders were also aware that the profession is becoming more accessible and were evidently leading their schools in a manner that was unique to them (Karp & Helgo, 2008), rather than trying to adopt traditional and typically more 'masculine' ways to lead people in contrast to findings from Eagly & Karau (2002). Indeed, these

women appear to lead with legitimacy and authenticity, arguably acquired through awareness of the power of claiming and granting leadership with followers (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

9.4 Limitations of the study

Given that this was a qualitative piece of research which explored the lived professional experiences and leadership identity development of only twelve female headteachers, the study is thus limited in its capacity to be viewed as more widely generalisable (Cohen et al., 2011). However, it is also not as transferable as it could have been due to the limited contextual information on the participants (Johnson et al., 2020). On reflection, if more personal information on the women had been collected, such as marital status, number of children, years in service, age, ethnicity, this could have increased the transferability of the study (Nowell et al., 2017) and speak to a wider audience. Moreover, knowing the years of service could have given deeper insight into the discussion on identity fusion because some of the women had been in post longer than others, or knowing more about the women's formal training opportunities could also have helped to better identify future recommendations from the findings of this study. It should be indicated that this was a choice made by the researcher at the time to maintain confidentiality (BERA, 2018).

Furthermore, the study also only focused on women from three counties in England and leaders of schools in the secondary school phase. Consequently, the findings of this thesis could not be directly applied to other educational institutions such as Higher Education or the primary sector, for example. Indeed, a larger scale study could have been conducted using quantitative methods or questionnaires which would have reached a wider sample of female secondary school headteachers and potentially discovered more about how leaders develop their identities. However, this approach might not have collated the depth of experience from the women or related such powerful and emotive stories, nor suited the ontological and epistemological stance of this research (Creswell, 2007).

Thus, there are limitations regarding the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study because the study did not discuss leadership learning or leadership development in detail. Equally, the study did not investigate and present all the formal training opportunities available to women in educational leadership in England within the literature review. Instead, it presented literature regarding four key concepts of leadership, identity, values and gender as well as that on lived experience, leadership identity, leadership identity development and research on secondary school headteachers. Moreover, having four key concepts has provided breadth to the study although focusing on fewer concepts may have arrived at different outcomes to how female secondary school headteachers develop a leadership identity.

Additionally, the study did not include males, thus providing only one perspective. Considering the definition of leadership employed for this research (Marchiondo et al., 2015) can be applied to both males and females, it would be worthy of further research to see if men construct their leadership identities in a similar way. Or, if male secondary school headteachers experience similar barriers to their advancement or leadership enactment. Furthermore, the sample does not involve a diverse set of women from a range of geographical areas, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds or with disabilities and it is acknowledged that a different sample could have unearthed different findings, even within the perspectives of a female-only sample.

There are limitations within the research design of the study. Some of the questions used in the narrative interview could be viewed as direct and as such, have encouraged explicit responses to some of the research questions, as with the final question as to personal views on the relative absence of female headteachers in the sector. However, this has been mitigated against due to the choice of inductive data analysis which therefore led the researcher to generate themes from across the whole set of interviews in response to the fourth research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Plus, one of the interviews was conducted in-person and the rest on Microsoft Teams due to the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic. It is acknowledged that the interview data may therefore have been impacted by this occurrence although again, the researcher mitigated against this possibility through considering how to achieve rapport through virtual interviews (Shapka et al., 2016).

In addition, the River of Life has proved to be a highly effective tool for some of the participants although is a weakness in the study, because only 50% of the drawings were voluntarily given to the researcher. As a creative tool, it appealed to some participants more than others and further investigation is needed into how it should be used as a research method with high profile busy professionals. On reflection, the researcher has considered if it would have been more effective to provide a template for completion, yet this could have hampered the creativity and personal reflexive nature of the task and potentially reduced the reality and honesty of the responses. The online nature of the interviews and the pressures of the global Covid-19 pandemic have also potentially contributed to how effective the Rivers of Life were and it could have been the case that the participants felt that the pictures, words or stories in the Rivers of Life could have revealed their identity (Scotland, 2012). Nevertheless, the Rivers of Life have provided the researcher with valuable experience in how to conduct research through the use of visuals and it is a method that the researcher would use again, forming part of the proposal for future research. They were also used effectively by the participants within the interview as a prompt to draw out their professional lived experiences over time. Thus, the Rivers of Life have provided mixed findings. One future option which would enable analysis of the multi-dimensional aspects of life histories and identify patterns of temporal overlap would be to use life history graphs rather than Rivers of Life (Fitzhugh et al., 2015). The graphs would then remove the risk of identification through writing or drawings. The life history graphs would also be able to incorporate the missing biographical data through the use of “spells” and “life domains” (Fitzhugh et al., 2015, p.18). Alternatively, life history graphs could be used in conjunction with the Rivers of Life or other life diagrams (Soderstrom, 2020).

9.5 Original contribution to knowledge

This study claims to make a theoretical, empirical and methodological original contribution to knowledge of how female secondary school headteachers have developed their leadership identity over time and how gender has played a part in shaping who they are as leaders. It also claims to contribute new knowledge to how a salient female leader identity helps to enable effective educational leadership through a strengthening of core and shared

values congruent with personal identity which drives the leadership of a school. The proposed contributions to knowledge will now be highlighted in themes:

Research design:

i) Using the River of Life as a research method when looking at the career narratives of female secondary school headteachers is, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the only study of its kind in this field. Although incorporating Rivers of Life into the research methodology was ambitious and not without its limitation (section 3.10 and section 9.4), what it provides is a creative and innovative approach to the topic. Talking through the Rivers of Life has brought an element of vulnerability to the phenomena so that the readers of this study can read about the emotions and challenges that these women have faced. Furthermore, learning about the advantages and disadvantages of using Rivers of Life as a research tool contributes to the extant research and development of the reflexivity of the researcher who is new to the field. Arguably, using the River of Life as a prompt to discussing and reflecting on leadership identity development could also be useful for developing aspirant headteachers or as continual professional development for existing headteachers due to the way in which it encourages the participant to make sense of their leadership identity through reflecting on prior experiences (Kempster, 2006).

ii) This study has used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the data to ensure the process has been iterative, inductive and most importantly reflexive. Given that the researcher is regarded as an insider in the field (Floyd & Arthur, 2012), the method of data analysis was chosen specifically because the researcher recognises that any findings are a product of the interpretations of the researcher (Palaganas et al., 2017) and therefore, it was essential to give a full and honest account of the steps taken throughout. Therefore, this study builds on the extant research on how to use reflexive thematic analysis as a new insider researcher working within the sector and

provide an alternative worked example of the process in tandem with visual methods (section 3.7).

Professional lived experiences and leadership:

iii) This research provides further insight into what guides and supports women to take the final step to headship. A major finding is that the most notable person in the stories of how these women came to become headteachers was the headteacher with whom they were working with at the time (section 8.2). This finding supports prior studies which highlight how important the headteacher is in a woman's decision to become a headteacher (Bruce-Golding, 2019; Lynch, 2021) but also goes against prior research which states that the gender of a headteacher (male) might negatively influence female advancement (Coleman, 2007). Within this study, it appeared that the headteacher's confidence in the women's ability to be a headteacher was more influential than gender on their decision to move to headship.

iv) In relation to the cited influences from notable people (Kempster, 2006), the women also seemed to encounter epiphany moments (Gary & Chambers, 2021) after difficult incidents during their careers. These moments seemed to be more about feelings of enlightenment or insight into what they needed to do next to advance in their advancement and forms a key outcome from this study in that it demonstrates how critical episodes can be turned into positive learning points (section 8.2).

v) The data analysis has shown that the leadership identity development of female secondary school headteachers over time can be aligned to models of leadership identity development from other contexts such as from Komives et al. (2005), Smith (2011) and McKillop and Moorosi (2017) as well as to theories of lived experience (Bandura, 1977; Kempster, 2006) (section 8.2). Such models could provide a framework to investigate leadership identity development in schools and be used as part of continual professional development activities for aspirant

leaders to pinpoint where they are in their leadership journeys and what they need to develop further.

Identity:

vi) Another contribution to knowledge from this study is that the women's leadership identities were not fragmented and they were able to comfortably move between identities to achieve identity congruence or identity fusion (Swann Jr. & Buhrmester, 2014) (section 8.3). This identity congruence appeared to come from practice in oscillating between identities over the years, particularly at points of transition (Ibarra, 1999) and some of the women explained that they had become more used to their headteacher identity over time.

vii) Another fresh contribution to knowledge which emerged connected to the embodiment of a leader's identity (Ford et al., 2017) (section 8.3) which might explain why women may physically embody the material persona of a female secondary school headteacher in order to project excellence in leadership, despite achieving perceived identity congruence between personal and professional identities based on affirmed values. This is a factor worthy of further research which could potentially be impacting on the uptake of women into leadership.

Values:

viii) A new contribution to knowledge is that the women were confident in balancing externally imposed pressures (Fuller, 2019) with intrinsic and espoused values (Warwas, 2014) (section 8.4). Indeed, these values became the driving force of their leadership, rather than imposed pressures to achieve academic outcomes and were embedded in the social identity of the established institutional group. The values of these women have been grouped into three leadership

philosophies which are leading with professional love, championing inclusion and advocating trust.

Gender:

ix) With regards to gender, this study suggests that there are still existing hurdles for women to overcome when aspiring to senior leadership which are societal, organisational, personal, attitudinal, cultural or stereotypical (Fuller, 2013; Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016) (section 8.5). These obstacles tended to be more visible at the senior leadership stage of the women's career or at the interview process. However, these challenges appeared to be surmountable, largely due to the increase in female role models and ripple effect of women in positions of headship which serve to showcase that female advancement to leadership is common.

x) This study reports that women do not lead in accordance with role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) (section 8.5), instead these women lead through having secure leadership identities which are underpinned by values of trust, integrity and what is best for the child. Notably, the women do not lead androgynously, rather embrace stereotypical feminine qualities of warmth, emotion and empathy but learn to use these characteristics in an authentic, yet managed way as part of their leadership identity.

9.6 Implications and recommendations for educational policy and practice

The findings of this study have a number of practical implications which will contribute to wider policy and professional practice. This thesis also aspires to encourage and inspire aspirant female leaders to apply for their desired role. The intention of this research is to provide further knowledge on how female secondary school headteachers develop their leadership identities through hearing the personal narratives of women in post. Another key priority of this research is to promote conversation on what it means to have a

leadership identity and how it impacts on successful leadership. If further knowledge on what female leaders need to become in order to do the role of a secondary school headteacher is not fully unearthed (Lewis, 2014), it is likely that women will remain under-represented in the role. Moreover, if extant, yet overcome gendered barriers in the sector are not discussed, as per those cited by the participants in this research which often appeared to occur at interviews, then these barriers are unlikely to change.

One of the recommendations from this study is that there could be more specific leadership training for female aspirant headteachers led by current female headteachers which focuses on reflection, sharing success stories and triumph (Moorosi, 2010) and that the influence headteachers have in inspiring aspirant leaders into the role is highlighted more prominently in the field. Additionally, because headteachers emerged as a key notable person in encouraging women into headship (section 8.2.3), this could equally be led by male headteachers. The introduction to this study highlighted that the training for headship is now more disparate since the NPQH is no longer mandatory (Cliffe, 2012) and groups of schools have become responsible for experiential training. This research has discovered that reflecting on informal professional lived experiences can be effective in understanding how future leaders develop in the context of secondary education. Indeed, the research methodology, figure of female secondary school leadership identity (Figure 8.1) and discussion of frameworks for developing leadership identities within this study could be incorporated into wider discussions of leadership development and professional practice within all levels of leadership in a setting.

The findings also suggest that the headteachers in this study are eager to trailblaze social change in the sector to enable a more diverse workforce. Therefore, one implication for policy and practice, is that more is done to trial flexible working within the sector. The participants in this research talked about the use of technology, flexible working hours and sabbaticals (section 7.5 and section 8.5.4), all of which could be discussed further by policy makers and with sharing case studies of when this has worked. Linked to this suggestion, it is also recommended that more leadership opportunities are given to future leaders. The women in this study were advocates of early opportunities to lead whole school mini-curriculum projects and in keeping with the ideas of Komives et al. (2005), providing

aspirant leaders with the opportunity to lead more widely could aid with the more widespread enhancement of leadership skills, experience, influence and role modelling.

Another interesting finding was that the women in this study highlighted how dealing with resource management problems acted as a barrier to the enactment of their leadership philosophies and school vision (section 6.6 and section 8.4.5), yet they appeared able to act resiliently to these challenges. Thus, another recommendation for professional practice and policy emerging from this study is to influence senior leadership training to include more training activity in financial and resource management so that new headteachers feel confident in resolving such problems whilst maintaining their core values. This would then help to minimise any potential inner tensions between values and externally imposed reform (Ball, 2003; Ball, 2021).

9.7 Recommendations for future research

As outlined in the introduction to this piece of research, there appears to be a vacuum of contemporary research on the lived experiences and leadership identity development of female secondary school headteachers in England and most of the research which has been written has been conducted by a small number of researchers, or conducted outside of the United Kingdom, in other educational phases, or historically. Furthermore, most of the research highlights the barriers to becoming a female secondary school headteacher, focusing on deputy headship level, rather than celebrating the success stories of those in the role. Consequently, this study offers many opportunities and suggestions for future study in this field which are outlined next.

i) The study focused on a sample of twelve female secondary school headteachers in the south of England and in response to the limitations (section 9.4), this study could be replicated in other parts of England where there might potentially be fewer clusters of female secondary school headteachers to see if the findings are similar. Or, it could be conducted to a wider and more diverse sample taking ethnicity, age, socioeconomical background or disability into account, for

example. Giving more exposure to the voice of the range of people in the job, will help to reach a wider pool of potential leaders. Moreover, the study could be replicated in an international context.

ii) Given that this study has explored leadership identity development through the lens of a female perspective, it would be advantageous for a similar study to be conducted with male secondary school headteachers to see if the findings are similar, particularly in their stories of leader identity development and in the use of the River of Life. Although this thesis has focused on female advancement to secondary school leadership, it is equally as essential for the future of education and our young people, to empower all future leaders to the role to ensure the sector is able to recruit the best leaders, particularly when considering the decrease in teachers wanting to be trained and the increase in headteachers leaving the sector as outlined in the introduction to this thesis (section 1.2).

iii) As a consequence of the limitations of this research (section 9.4) and the contribution to knowledge (section 9.5.i), it is also recommended that further research is conducted on the use of Rivers of Life in interpretivist research which focuses on revealing lived experience and particularly with high profile leaders. This research should provide an evaluated framework for their effective use and include the positives and limitations of using Rivers of Life as a tool because the research on the efficacy of using Rivers of Life as a research instrument is minimal. Alternatively, how life history graphs or life diagrams could be used in investigating this phenomena would be a recommendation for further exploration. In addition, worthy of research, is to discover the perspectives of participants who have drawn the Rivers of Life and to find out how this particular research method has benefitted them as leaders, rather than purely looking only at the interpretations of the researcher.

iv) As highlighted as a contribution to knowledge (section 9.5.11), this thesis used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for its data analysis due to its focus on reflexivity (sections 1.4, 3.9.1), however it is recommended that other

research methods might be used to explore the phenomena, particularly Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Whitney & Cooperrider, 1998). The AI approach purports that all people have strengths which can be employed to enact change to help create a more positive future. It works on a framework which leads participants to connect their past to their future through a 4-D cycle of discover, dream, design and destiny (Whitney & Cooperrider, 1988) and could be effective in focusing on individual leadership identity development through leading participants to envisage a better future based on what is already working well. Previous studies, such as on peer review of teaching (Fileborn et al., 2020) and the facilitation of student voice (Bergmark & Kostenius, 2018) attest that AI draws out strengths and best practice, thus looking forward to how people want to be, rather than honing in on deficits. Bushe and Kassam (2005) posit that AI is suited to storytelling because the first level of 'discovery' (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) can require a person to affirm their best experiences of work or teamship and therefore appreciate why a practice is successful, on which to further build and enact change. This approach could therefore be useful when exploring leadership identity transition and continue the culture of sharing success stories and 'what works' from the sector.

v) One of the contributions to knowledge of this study is that one of its findings proposes that the female headteachers in this study are conscious of their physical embodiment of being a headteacher (section 8.3.3), giving an example relating to clothes and how what is being worn can provide an impression on the quality of their leadership. This finding links to the identity work from Goffman (1963) and suggests that female secondary school headteachers see their identities through the eyes of others. Given that there is a lack of diversity within the sector, it is recommended that there is more exploration into how the material persona of a headteacher might impact negatively or positively on aspirant, or non-aspirant headteachers.

vi) Another key finding was that the women felt their gender was more visible the more they advanced with their careers, suggesting that there are still some

barriers of social injustice within the sector (section 8.5). Therefore, it is recommended that more research is conducted into senior leaders' interview experiences which could in turn impact on future professional training opportunities.

9.8 Concluding comments

This study sought to find solutions to the relative absence of female secondary school headteachers in the sector and to give a voice to the women who are in the role in order to hear what has supported and guided them to headship and to hopefully inspire others to apply. Through focusing on revealing thick description and inspirational stories, this study has concluded that these women have developed salient leader identities over time and that these leadership identities enable them to lead their schools in a way which is personal to them, based on a suite of key components (Figure 8:1). The study has discovered that how these women have developed their leadership identities is complex and that over the course of their careers, they have been nurtured and influenced to become leaders, both positively and negatively, by notable people. The women recalled critical incidents and told stories of how they reacted to setbacks but also how they grew in character from these trigger moments. The women are highly skilled in broadcasting and enabling leadership, strategically communicating their values and vision to create shared goals which centre on the child and the growth of their staff. The women appeared to be highly reflective and self-aware, continually working on their identities, driven to maintain a core sense of purpose and sense of who they are whilst explaining that sometimes they need to have different versions of themselves. Furthermore, these women expressed a desire to implement social change to create a more inclusive and diverse future workforce and are committed to empowering others whilst being true to who they are.

This thesis has led to several new contributions to knowledge. The choice of research methods has shown that Rivers of Life are a successful tool in prompting participants to reflect in advance on their professional lived experience but can be difficult to administer in practice. Using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) aids further reflexivity for

researchers who are embedded in the research field because the method prompts the researcher to contextualise and examine their own judgements, preconceptions and presumptions (Nilson, 2017). The headteacher has emerged as a key driver in what creates future leaders and therefore presents a vital implication for professional practice and policy. The majority of women in this study would not have taken the leap to headship without the confidence instilled in them by their headteacher at the time. The stories from these women have shown that their professional paths have not been absent of challenge, yet what connects these women has been their desire to overcome setbacks and to see failure as an epiphany moment to future growth and direction. Extant models of leadership identity development in the literature have appeared to align to the professional lived experiences of the women and consequently, could be used to develop aspirant leaders, particularly in conjunction with other tools, such as the River of Life. The women have shown that at headteacher level, it is possible to lead altruistically, despite some of the barriers school leaders face and this enables this group of women to achieve an element of identity congruence. Finally, it would seem that there are still existing hurdles of social injustice within the sector and this thesis serves to highlight that more could be done at policy level to explore flexibility within the sector and to reach out to a more diverse workforce.

The impetus for this research arose from my personal experiences of leadership. As a senior school leader, I lacked confidence and was conscious of competing identities within me, leading to a sense of unease. Through completing this study and exploring in-depth the professional lived experiences of such insightful and inspirational women, I have reflected on who I am as a leader and the importance this role carries. I have thought deeply about the language I use in leadership, how I broadcast my leadership identity and enable others. I have reflected on my values and reflected on how I can consolidate them as a leader. I have been inspired by the narratives from these women and their commitment to leading with kindness. Moreover, completing a Doctorate in Education has greatly increased my knowledge of how to conduct research at this level and I feel able to better pursue further research or supervision in the area of educational leadership identity development. In particular, it should be noted that aspects of this study have not been successful and this has led me to reflect deeply on how to approach the research of this phenomena more

effectively in the future. In the introductory chapter, I committed to adopting reflexivity throughout the study due to my awareness of my situatedness. Learning how to 'do' reflexivity and to be reflexive has been a process of self-discovery. As I approach the end of this thesis, I realise how I have become an improved leader and researcher through evaluating my own River of Life and how the process of completing doctoral study has enabled me to become more aware of my worldview.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this thesis will inspire aspirant female leaders to believe in themselves and to take the leap to headship remembering that the stories from this group of inspirational women show how it is possible to lead by being true to oneself:

> *I guess I'm the leader who wears their heart on their sleeve, I trust others, I'm fair, trust and fairness are my big values, and everybody is aware of that. (Jenna)*

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University of Reading

Appendix A Ethical Approval Form

Ethical Approval Form A (version May 2019)

Tick one:

Staff project: _____ PhD ____ EdD __√__

Name of applicant (s): Sarah Marston

Title of project: Exploring the leadership of female secondary school headteachers

Name of supervisor (for student projects): Dr. Karen Jones

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?	√		
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.

[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.

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.

There will be a pilot study involving two participants.
The main study will involve 12 participants.

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:**
   Exploring the leadership of female secondary school headteachers

2. **Purpose of project and its academic rationale:**
   Women continue to be under-represented in headteacher positions in secondary schools and their relative absence from the top jobs in secondary school education remains a much debated concern. Statistics from the Department for Education (2015) state that there is still a shortage of female headteachers and that only 38% of secondary school headteachers are female, even though 63% of the workforce is predominantly female. However, in the same report, headteachers and senior leaders represented 10.8% of teachers in secondary schools which was a rise from 9.7% in 2010, showing that there are increasing opportunities to reach that position. In addition, the Department for Education (2015) also documented that the highest proportion of women who have succeeded in becoming secondary school Headteachers is 44.5%, in the South East of England and South London. This study intends to explore the conceptual themes of authenticity and identity of female secondary school headteachers. The rationale for the choice of these two concepts is that they are key themes which emerge from existing research about women in leadership, particularly for why there is a relative absence of females in leadership.

   In addition, there is a lack of research on how these concepts display themselves in female secondary school headteachers. From my own perspective as a female leader, there has often been a juxtaposition between leading as 'oneself, or leading as 'another'. The role of the headteacher requires women to bring together identity work, identity regulation and the desire to be considered as authentic (Nyberg & Sveningsson, 2014). According to role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), women leaders are more likely to be viewed as unsuited to leadership and evaluated less favourably than male counterparts. This can lead to feeling they need to lead in particular ways, rather than being themselves. It can lead to performances of identity that do not reflect the authentic self and feelings of disconnect between

identity performances and authenticity. The research questions for this study are:

1. To what extent do female headteachers of secondary schools in England feel authentic?
2. What are the key identity defining moments in the career histories of female headteachers of secondary schools in England?

3. **Brief description of methods and measurements:**
   This research will adopt a case study approach and will involve four data collection instruments. These are:
   - A pre-task asking the participants to create a river of life on how they have constructed their leadership identity which will be brought to the interview for discussion.
   - A scrutiny of the participant's online profile, via the secondary school website to research how they construct their public identity
   - A semi-structured interview (45 minutes) with the purpose of collecting reflections on the above and further researching the two conceptual themes. The interview will occur in person although as this study is taking place in the context of a pandemic, it is anticipated that the interviews may need to be conducted via Microsoft Teams. Please see risk assessment below for further details.
   - An analysis of the researcher's field notes and transcript of the interview with a focus on metaphor.

4. **Participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria:** Two participants will be invited to take part in, and comment on, a pilot study. Both pilot participants will be female, in the 40-55 age range, White British and the headteacher of a mixed 11-18 secondary school comprehensive in England. The results of the pilot will be reviewed and the plans for data collection amended if necessary in light of the success of the pilot. As this research is based on a case study approach, only twelve participants will be invited to take part. All twelve participants will be secondary school headteachers in England.

5. **Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary):**
   Please see appendices for copies of the required forms:
   Appendix 1: the participant information letter which summarises the details of the study
   Appendix 2: the participant consent form
   Appendix 3: the task for the River of Life
   Appendix 4: questions for the researcher to use when analysing the school website
   Appendix 5: interview schedule and interview questions

6. **A clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them:**
   As this study is likely to occur predominantly in the local region of my place of work, some of the participants may fear that they might be identified within

the report. To counter this, all names and schools will be anonymised. The purpose of the study will be shared clearly with the participant and how the data will be stored and shared explained. All data will be held in the strictest confidence and held on a password protected UoR computer. All ethics requirements and GDPR will be explained to the participant. All hard copies of notes will be filed in a locked cabinet in a locked office at the UoR.

Specific considerations for the data collection are outlined below:
As the researcher can be considered as an insider due to their previous experience and professional relationships within field, the researcher has considered how it will not only be necessary to apply for the required external ethical approval from the university, but also review the complexities of internal ethics which are the continued professional relationships with the participants, insider knowledge, anonymity and a potential conflict of professional and researcher role (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). The considerations of internal ethics are outlined in the risk assessment below.

7. **Estimated start date and duration of project:**
   Pilot study: October 2020
   Data collection: November and December 2020
   Transcription of interviews: To be done during the data collection stage, November and December 2020
   Writing up of results: January until March 2021

B: I consider that this project **may** have ethical implications that should be brought before the Institute's Ethics Committee.	

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.

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

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 then.
7. estimated start date and duration of project

RISK ASSESSMENT: Please complete the form below

Brief outline of Work/activity:	The researcher will be asking the participant to create a river of life and take part in an interview. The researcher will also be analysing the online profile of the participant via the school website.

Where will data be collected?	It will be collected in a secondary school.

Significant hazards:	There is a risk that the participant may be identified through the study. The researcher is potentially known to all of the participants. Covid-19. It should be acknowledged that the study will take place in the context of a pandemic and therefore there are additional risks to the participants and researcher. All setting health and safety measures will be adhered to by the researcher and participant.

Who might be exposed to hazards?	The participants, researcher and other people within the school.

Existing control measures:	To consider the advice from insider research so that both external and internal ethics are taken into account. To highlight how this risk will be mitigated in the consent form and discussed at the introductory interview. To follow all Covid-19 protocols. The researcher will bring their own recording device. It is anticipated that as this study is being conducted in the context of a pandemic that the interviews may need to take place via Microsoft Teams. If this happens, then the researcher will follow the protocols for interviewing and recording interviews on Microsoft Teams according to University policy.

Are risks adequately controlled:	Yes.

If NO, list additional controls and actions required:	Additional controls	Action by:

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

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

University of Reading

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…Sarah Marston……. Date…13.09.20…….

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……Holly Joseph…….. Date…22/9/2020….
(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.

University of Reading

Appendix B Details for the River of Life

(Rationale – to explore the concept of leadership identity development)

Instructions for the participant:

One of the key themes of this study is identity and how female secondary school headteachers construct their identity. To help to better understand how you have constructed your leadership identity, please could you create a River of Life. You may use any size paper and you should take 15 minutes to complete the task. We will discuss your thoughts about the River of Life in the interview and I will record your responses. Think about your journey to headship as a mixture of different streams and rivers. Consider the times when life was fast-moving or challenges arose which may have presented themselves such as rocks. Use the metaphor as fully as you can as there may be lakes, ponds, rapids, waterfalls etc.

Please bring the River of Life to the interview for discussion.

Appendix C Participant Information Sheet

Researcher: Sarah Marston
Phone: 01183782695
Email: s.m.marston@reading.ac.uk

Research Project (Title): Exploring the leadership of secondary school female headteachers

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about the leadership of female secondary school headteachers.

What is the study?

I am conducting a study which explores the leadership by female secondary school headteachers. I am interested in finding out more about how female secondary school headteachers lead their schools. I am hoping to work with twelve female secondary school headteachers, who have been selected due to their gender, age, ethnicity and location. The purpose of the study is to investigate how successful female secondary school headteachers construct their identity and how authentic they feel in their role.

Why have you been chosen to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you are a female secondary school headteacher of an 11-18 comprehensive school in England.

Do I need to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you consent to participate. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting myself s.m.marston@reading.ac.uk

What will happen if I take part?

Before the interview, I will ask you to create a pre-task river of life to explore the theme of identity construction. I would like to keep your River of Life to use as an example of the data collation. I will be looking at your school website to gain further insight into the concept of identity. The study will conclude with your involvement in a one-to-one interview with myself which will be recorded and transcribed. The interview will last an hour and take place at a mutually convenient date and time. I will share all notes and transcriptions with yourself. The data will then be used to explore how female secondary school headteachers construct their identities and to describe how authentic they feel in their role.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information given by you in the study will remain confidential and will only be seen by myself. Neither you, the staff, the pupils, the governors or the school will be identifiable in any published report resulting from the study. Information about individuals will not be shared with the school. I anticipate that the findings of the study will be useful for aspiring

female secondary school headteachers and inform future training of potential female leaders.

There is also a time commitment for you to consider because if you choose to take part, then you will be required to spend 15 minutes of your own time drawing the River of Life task and then give an additional hour of your time to the interview. However, it is felt that the benefits of being involved in such research will outweigh the time spent on the process.

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. The records of this study will be kept private.

No identifiers linking the teacher, school or any member of staff or governor to the study will be included in any sort of report or academic paper that might be published based on the data. Research records will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected computer and only the research team will have access to the records. 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. The researcher can send the results of this research to you electronically if you wish to have them.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact either Sarah Marston or Karen Jones.

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
Access your personal data or ask for a copy
Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you

Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
Restrict uses of your data
Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.
You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) at https://ico.org.uk

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. You may withdraw your consent to participation by contacting myself s.m.marston@reading.ac.uk or my supervisor, Dr Karen Jones karen.jones@reading.ac.uk
If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard the school's data.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr. Karen Jones, University of Reading; Tel: 0118 378 2603, email: karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

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.

Appendix D Details of the schools in the study

Table 3:2

Showing the range of schools in the study, taken from: https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/

School Label (a-l)	Type of School	Age Range	Ofsted Grade	Admissions Policy	Gender	Religious Character
A	Academy Converter (Academy Trust)	11-18	Good	Non-selective	Mixed	None
B	Academy Converter (Academy Trust)	11-18	Outstanding	Non-selective	Mixed	None
C	Academy Converter (Academy Trust)	11-18	Outstanding	Non-selective	Mixed	None
D	Academy Converter (Academy Trust)	11-18	Good	Non-selective	Mixed	None
E	Academy Converter (Academy Trust)	11-18	Good	Non-selective	Mixed	None
F	Academy Converter (Academy Trust)	16-19	Good	Not applicable	Mixed	None
G	Academy Alternative Provision Converter (Academy Trust)	5-18	Good	Not applicable	Mixed	None
H	University Technical College (Academy Trust)	14-19	Outstanding	Non-selective	Mixed	None
I	Academy Converter (Single Academy Trust)	11-18	Good	Non-selective	Mixed	None
J	Academy Converter (Single Academy Trust)	11-18	Requires Improvement	Non-selective	Mixed	None
K	Academy Sponsor-led (Academy Trust)	11-18	Requires Improvement	Non-selective	Mixed	None
L	Community School	11-18	Good	Non-selective	Mixed	None

Appendix E Questions for the pilot interview

Table 3.3

Showing the questions used in the pilot interview

1. Talk me through your River of Life and tell me how this has shaped who you are?
2. Tell me about any opportunities the drawing expresses?
3. Tell me about any barriers the drawing expresses?
4. What metaphors are being used?
5. What do you feel your school website say about you and who you are as the leader of the school?
6. What is the purpose of your website?
7. To what extent do you feel the website portrays you as the leader of the school?
8. To what extent do you feel that the website would be considered as authentic?
9. Do you see any metaphors in your website? If yes, what are they and are these deliberate?
10. To what extent do you do feel that you lead authentically?
11. To what extent do you believe that being authentic in your role is important?
12. How does authenticity display itself in your leadership?
13. How does your leadership work differ according to the audience?
14. How do you construct your identity?
15. How do you think the teachers in your school would describe you as a leader?
16. Why do you think there might be a relative absence of female secondary school Headteachers?

Appendix F Questions removed from the pilot interview

Table 3.4

Showing the questions which were removed following the pilot

1. Talk me through your River of Life and tell me how this has shaped who you are?
2. Tell me about any opportunities the drawing expresses?
3. Tell me about any barriers the drawing expresses?
4. What metaphors are being used? NO
5. What do you feel your school website say about you and who you are as the leader of the school?
6. What is the purpose of your website? NO
7. To what extent do you feel the website portrays you as the leader of the school? NO
8. To what extent do you feel that the website would be considered as authentic? NO
9. Do you see any metaphors in your website? If yes, what are they and are these deliberate? NO
10. To what extent do you do feel that you lead authentically?
11. To what extent do you believe that being authentic in your role is important?
12. How does authenticity display itself in your leadership? NO
13. How does your leadership work differ according to the audience?
14. How do you construct your identity?
15. How do you think the teachers in your school would describe you as a leader?
16. Why do you think there might be a relative absence of female secondary school headteachers?

Appendix G Final list of questions for the interview

Table 3.5

Showing the final list of questions used with all participants

1. Talk me through your River of Life and tell me how this has shaped who you are?
2. Tell me about any opportunities the drawing expresses? (if not answered already in question 1)
3. Tell me about any barriers the drawing expresses? (if not answered already in question 1)
4. To what extent do you feel the website portrays you as the leader of the school?
5. To what extent do you do feel that you lead authentically?
6. How does your leadership work differ according to the audience?
7. How do you construct your identity?
8. How do you think the teachers in your school would describe you as a leader?
9. Why do you think there might be a relative absence of female secondary school headteachers?

Appendix H Excerpts from the transcripts of the participants

Margaret:

'Right ok, so I started on the left of the picture as a job of the NQT. I always wanted to be a teacher ever since I was five, so I veered off and looked at things like planning and things like that because xxxxxxxxxx was always my subject, but also back to teaching and so, on my River of Life there, you've got me as a xxxxxxxxxx NQT. I've put some colour on there because actually everything is happy and jolly, that's not to say everything isn't later on, but I accepted everything, any time anybody said do you want to do this, I would just say 'yeah, I'll do that!', so I'd take a trip, I'd go on a trip and I was really lucky in the school that I worked in, because it was a really supportive team and I got opportunities to take trips with children and go out and about and to really supplement my teaching. I guess what I really focused on there was that you don't realise it until I think you get further on in your career and get to be a more experienced teacher, but all I think you really care about as an NQT, is that they come in, they do some work, you can take it in, you can mark it and give it back to them, all those things around 'Is that the right type of learning?' 'Is that getting what I want you to do?' and you just want them to do what you're asking them to do, have that semblance of control'.

Jenna:

'I think there is not enough role modelling. I don't think as a sector we are flexible enough. When I think of our young leaders coming through now, who have got young families, are we flexible enough to let the female leaders be able to do both? Do we give enough flexibility for leaders to relinquish a responsibility, while they're bringing their children up as that's the most important thing for them at that time and understand that that's the most important thing for them at that time. A big part of who they are. And their life journeys and give them an opportunity to come back almost at, as a secondment to look after their family. We don't do that, do we and we don't give flexibility at that point. I don't think we give flexibility when we have people middle of their career, maybe looking after elderly

relatives and family , I don't think we give flexibility at that stage of people's careers. I just think we're really system driven and orientated and I don't think that helps females in particular to come through. I think we've also got this what I've just described as my career would be perfect at putting off any females at any of those stages coming through of their career. Where you are almost pigeon-holed into a box. You're the firm, hard person who is making their way up through leadership. I don't think that that's true and that's the way you have to lead'.

Pam:

'I think I'm a people person. I hope and the feedback I get from people is that I value people, people will succeed if they feel valued and the students succeed if the staff feel valued. So I try and value everyone and make a real effort to be present around school. I make a real effort to talk to people, to smile at people, to take an interest in their day to day lives and their well-being and that's students and staff around school. So in my diary I will make sure there is blocked out time where I can otherwise your day just runs away from you. So I will block out time in my diary which is purely for just being around the school, being around at lunchtimes, breaktimes, walking around during lessons and we've got an open door policy. I don't shut my door unless I'm in a meeting. My office door is always open. So in terms of authenticity, I want people to be honest with me and I want people to be open with me. I want to know if they're not happy about something or if they are happy about something I want people to be able to be transparent and I think the only way that I can expect others to be like that is if I role model that myself. So that's what I always try to do, to be open, honest and transparent and communicate well'.

Demelza:

'One of my core values is to have integrity. For me integrity is the one thing. For me it's so essential for what we do. Actually, I can't imagine leading without authenticity because it's so in sync with the one thing, it's right at the top of my values, is integrity, personal opinion, moral behaviour, the combination of honesty and the moral application of it, even if we

don't agree, I want to know. Honesty is absolutely key. I think my leadership is authentic. I'd want to ask my team that'.

Molly:

'I lead from the heart. I lead in what I believe in and what I feel passionate about and how we are going to do things. I think I'm very authentic with my leadership. I don't know if my colleagues would agree or not. Authentic is about being you, isn't it? I'm just who I am, I don't .. although that's interesting actually. Maybe in some situations, I'm not authentic because it's not how I want to lead'.

'All of that is really important and I think that's what puts women off actually. As creatures we work really hard and we will do our best as long as our own children and family are fed and happy. We will work all hours to get us to where we want to be but give us some flexibility to do that. It's nuts as there are so many women in education. Being a Headteacher you can trailblaze that. So really, more women should aspire to change this really 'stuck''.

Joan:

'That time I was really, really pleased I went there even though it was really hard, really long days, you know you're talking morning to 8 at night. I got a lot out of that and learnt a lot, steep learning curve, but learnt, learnt a lot from being there about rapid change, about progress etc. and about how to get change and how to get people on side to make change, about as a leader about having clarity of message and clarity of vision and purpose and the fact that that enables you to get change and that actually you're always going to have a few that are not going to be with you. And you've got to be ready for that and just put on your tin hat and take it and go 'well, really sorry, but this is why this has got to happen'. Just as long as you have got your clarity of message and clarity of purpose, they just have to come along with you at the end of the day and I say if you bring the critical mass with you, they have to just go with it. So that was a real steep learning curve there, it was a really good experience and I'm glad that I had that experience'.

Kerensa:

'I don't think it's that conscious. I think overtime and when I run studies on leadership and training on that kind of thing it's great because it just makes you think about yourself, it's one of the best reasons for doing it. I think you get, I tried to be more overtly conscious of what I'm doing so that I am always, I'm very reflective person, everything gets evaluated. That is very much how leadership operates and if you don't operate like that, it's more why? So if something happens, there has to be 'Why did it go well? Learn from the success. Why did it go badly? What could we have done differently so in terms of my identity? It has to be reflective and I have to be thinking about who am I what am I portraying every day? I think I naturally portray to others the strength of convictions that I have'.

Tamsin:

'I would never have understood that I was introducing a new thing and I was doing a curriculum of it and all of those sorts of things. It was a little practice about being a tiny headteacher and moreover I find it really stimulating and loved the twist about the lake, just liking that change and then did another change in that same school where I decide to be a head of year. And thought will I like this pastoral part and loved it too and but the difference was this, I just loved the influence of it. It wasn't the power of decision making particularly that I craved. Going to a group of 300 children, I suddenly liked the broadness of that. The influence, the baton and the impact and so it was a really happy easy flowing river. Nothing really interrupted that. I thought, I think I would like to see if that's the feeling I get out of being a head of year, I would really like to be involved in the more strategic parts of a school. And influencing teachers now. Not just influencing pupils'.

Laine:

'You can never please everybody all of the time, I think I'm respected, I think they know that I genuinely care about them and care about the children. I get stuck in, so for example with Covid I got stuck in. I've covered lessons and I think they respect that, they respect that I'm not just sitting at a desk pushing paper around. I think they realise I have very high

expectations and sometimes they challenge me on that. The fact that so many of them stay for so long and obviously the kids are lovely and it's a nice place to work but it's also about the ethos and the values being right as if they didn't like it, they wouldn't stay and I think that they acknowledge that they are given lots of opportunities to develop, to share their ideas. I'm very much of the opinion that if they have an idea and they've thought it through and it is reasonable then as far as I humanly can I will give them a chance to give it a go'.

Beki:

'I'm not a very deep person but I think my river of life reflects that. I just think I've always been quite fast moving. So not necessarily geographically, but definitely vocationally or anything that gives me interest. So, xxxxxx is my 5th school in 20 years which I suppose isn't that many, but everything has moved quite fast. I said my river was steady, but fairly fast and there's been a few, I've called them rock pools, in my river but nothing significant. Unfortunately, those rock pools are round about now. 20 years before that, it's been fast moving but not very dramatic which maybe I've been fortunate. The challenges I would say have not been significant enough to have said there's a rapid or anything like that. Even now, I think it's fast moving but I would've said that even as an NQT or Head of Department it was fast-moving. I think I would often make that speed myself by picking up other challenges along the way. I've got more challenges in the current role and that's for a variety of reasons so I put some streams coming in to add to the mix now, whereas everything else was quite smooth. So I couldn't really tell you how my current situation is shaping me. I'm in it, I'm quite stuck in it at the moment. But hopefully I'll come out of it stronger'.

Ann:

'So it was a really exciting period when we could really devise a curriculum which suited a wider range of kids, to be genuinely really inclusive. To push to be outstanding and inclusive. That was a pretty long journey actually, to get people's minds to that was a possibility, where you could keep all these learners, where you could find places for them all without watering down the excellence if you like. I never wanted to be principal really. I was never

driven by that. I was driven by what it was we were trying to do basically and then when xxxxxxx retired, I had to either throw my hat into the ring or risk someone else doing it'.

Morwenna:

'What has always been important to me is being happy in my own life, I think this is a female thing as well, I never thought I knew enough to be a Head, I now know nobody knows enough to be anything and I think and again I'm generalising but I think men are much more likely to take that leap but I think generally women often think 'I don't know enough, I need to learn more, I need to know more before I could do it' but once you're in it you realise that somebody knows something, if nobody knows then it does not matter. As deputy and I think it's true of anybody who's been anywhere for a long time I knew where every key was, every room was, I was teaching children of people I had taught at the school, so I became the 'go-to' person and that's hard work. I quite enjoy that aspect of it and I didn't ever want to be Head because as I said I didn't want to kind of disrupt the life I had.

Appendix I Demonstrating the steps of the data analysis

Figure 3.4

Example of initial thoughts of the researcher during step 1 of the data analysis for one participant

> *Margaret had always wanted to be a teacher, starting her career with trepidation. As a Newly Qualified Teacher, Margaret took on lots of opportunities to develop her knowledge and became a middle leader very early on. She moved to another school to another middle leadership position although here struggled to establish herself with particular classes and found the transition difficult. However, she grew from this experience and progressed to leading a faculty in another school where again, she encountered difficult people who she had to learn to lead. She experienced knockbacks when applying for a headship and experienced anger because the interview process was not based on meritocracy. When she became a headteacher, Margaret felt she was wearing a mask. Margaret is now very 'wedded' to her school and her children go to the school. She is conscious of how others view her work/life balance and considers what she wears as a headteacher as part of her identity as a headteacher.*

Figure 3.5

Showing an extract from the first layer of initial coding from Margaret's transcription

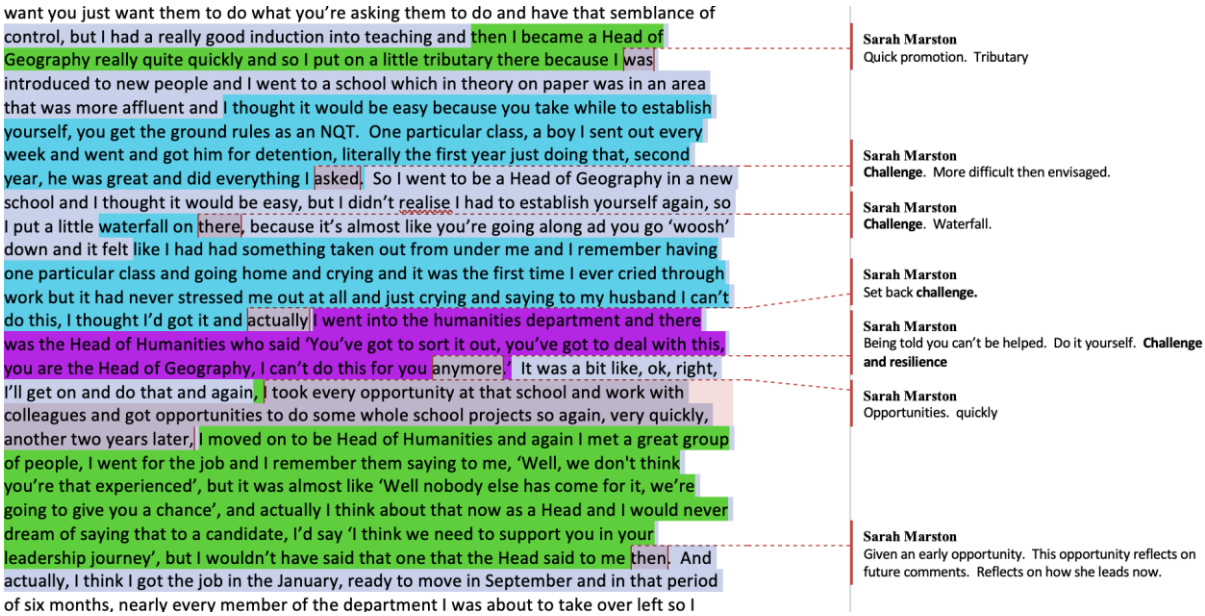


Figure 3.6

Extract from Margaret's River of Life showing how the drawing supported the interview

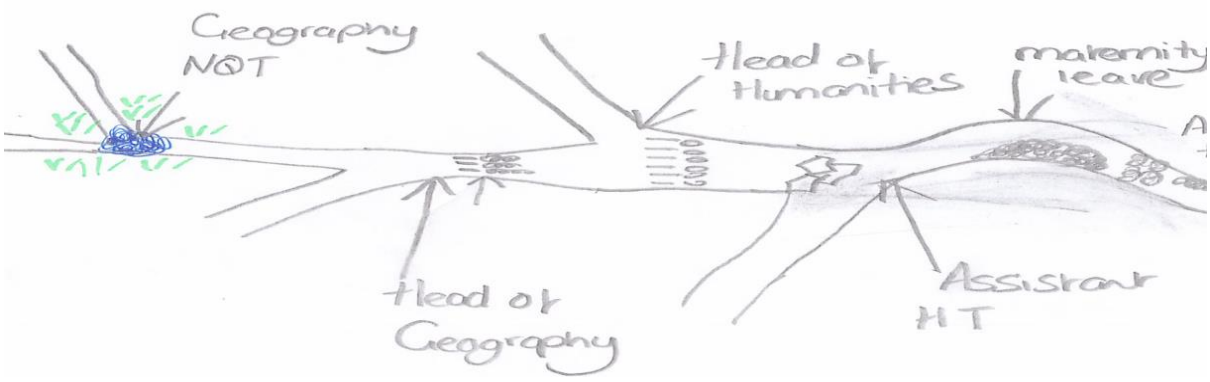


Figure 3.7

Extract from Tamsin's transcript showing coding

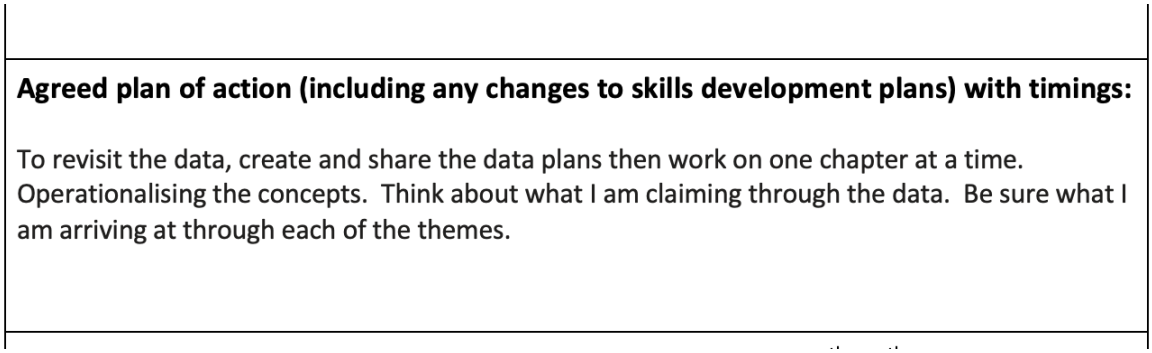
I think by midway through the course I suddenly had that moment, I thought I actually might be good at this. Instead of being at the middle of the pack, I thought oh hang on. So I started my teaching career like a gurgling spring really. I really had a lot of energy. **(Trepidation)**
I couldn't see anything that was or would just have stopped things happening. I don't know I was just full of optimism. Perhaps the innocence of youth and all that sort of thing and because I had such a good experience at university on both my teaching practice, one of which was at Breock*, the Head at the time told me tuck my shirt in. Then I got my first job and it was in xxxxxxxx, I had no discernment or political acumen at all and when I talk about it, it was literally 'when might there be a job?' - genuinely and didn't even cross my mind that the first school that you work in really does affect the rest of your career.
I didn't understand it was a terrible school in really difficult circumstances. It didn't matter to me, it really didn't, I loved it. I loved the community of teaching, I loved that I found it so easy. I didn't really bat an eyelid. **(passion/love)** All the things that an NQT can, I really didn't. But I had a female head of department who was dreadful.
And not dreadful in terms of attendance or drive for the department, but it was like with the stones in the river, it interrupted the flow because she was so emotional. **(impact of emotion)**

Figure 3.8

Extract from Tamsin's River of Life showing alignment from the River of Life to the transcript

Figure 3.9

Example of notes from a supervisory meeting focusing on being reflexive



Agreed plan of action (including any changes to skills development plans) with timings:

To revisit the data, create and share the data plans then work on one chapter at a time. Operationalising the concepts. Think about what I am claiming through the data. Be sure what I am arriving at through each of the themes.

Table 3.7

Showing an example of building first layer of initial themes across the data

1st layer of coding	Initial themes
Quick promotion More difficult Challenge Set-back Resilience Signs of salient leadership *(Margaret)*	Early opportunities for leadership Building resilience Starting from NQT year
Trepidation Love and passion for the profession Impact of emotion seen from others *(Tamsin)*	Early opportunities for leadership Trepidation for the profession Awareness of emotion Building resilience Remembering PGCE and NQT year

Table 3.8

Example of proposed themes for part of the thematic analysis for RQ1

Further data analysis
Step 4
Reviewing themes

Proposed themes:

- start with PGCE which builds pedagogical expertise
- development as a professional

codes	Participant(s) Number of instances	Examples from transcript
Joan (resilience, good grounding for the career) Tamsin (found teaching easy) Demelza (exhilarating, essential, reflecting on mistakes, resilience) Laine (doing PGCE a bit later, worked first, formed opinion on importance of pedagogy) Pam (resilience, tough, not supported, inspirational lecturer, focus on pedagogy) Kerensa	6 Joan, Tamsin, Demelza, Laine, Pam, Kerensa	Joan *So that the course as it was then I think just made you build your resilience. You either made it or you didn't.* Tamsin *I suppose what I really found easy was the behaviour management, I just had the presence, the tone of voice and knew where to stand naturally.* Demelza *So even in my training year, having those 3 weeks in the classroom, unqualified, acting as if I was, was essential.* Kerensa *I would say that from the source therefore at this point, it's all quite free flowing following my PGCE at xxxxxxwhich again was quite an academic PGCE always the xxxxx intent, which I enjoyed.* *Laine got into teaching quite late when I said that I was a 25/26 when I did my PGCE .....I think that the 'young-uns' who come in now, you know particularly when they have had a bit of prior experience, they'll come in asking for really high salaries and my line has always been no because your bread and butter of the job is your craft in the classroom and no amount of banking or whatever, so show me you can do that and then we'll use your other stuff*
All participants bar 1 (Morwenna) name their subject.		

Table 3.9

Showing final codes and themes for RQ1

Final codes	Final theme
PGCE experiences and NQT experiences Early opportunities for middle leadership development	Early career
The role of influence The role of emotion	Mid-career
Key defining moments, positive and negative of senior leadership The decision to be a headteacher	Senior career

Figure 3.10

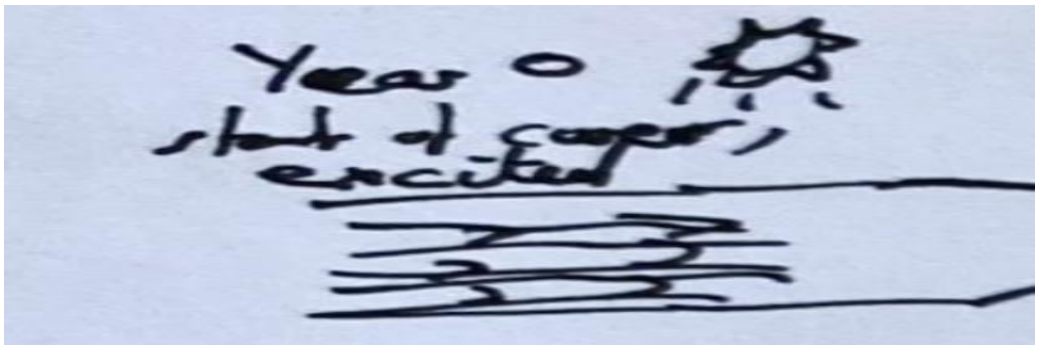
Extract of notes from a supervisory meeting at stage six of the process

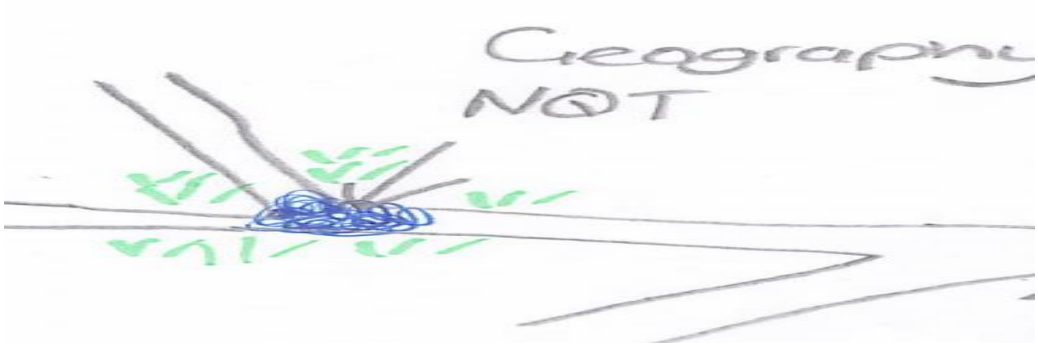
Focus/topic of meeting: Review of reviewed codes and themes
Main points discussed (progress achieved/difficulties discussed etc.) How to revisit the codes and themes and to fine tune the codes and themes for each RQ.

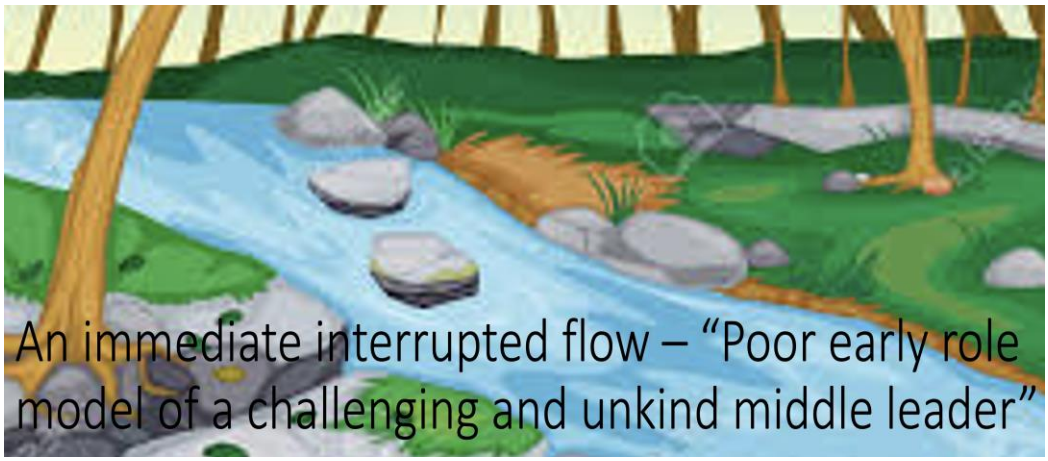
Appendix K Extracts from the Rivers of Life

Figure 3.11

Extracts from the Rivers of Life collected by the researcher








2003- 2004 Taught abroad including Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Australia
2003 Offered HoD but took sabbatical to travel

University of Reading

Appendix J Participant Consent Form

Research Project: ***Exploring the leadership of secondary school female headteachers***

Name, position and contact address of Researcher	**Name, position and contact address of Supervisor**
Sarah Marston Programme Director of Secondary Initial Teacher Training University of Reading Institute of Education London Road campus 4 Redland Road Reading RG1 5EX 01183782695 s.m.marston@reading.ac.uk	Dr. Karen Jones Associate Professor Educational Leadership and Management, Ed.D Programme Director University of Reading Institute of Education London Road campus 4 Redland Road Reading RG1 5EX 01183782603 karen.jones@reading.ac.uk

This application has been reviewed by the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

		Please initial box
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.	☐
3.	I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

		Please tick box	
		Yes	**No**
4.	I agree to the interview being audio recorded.	☐	☐
5.	I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.	☐	☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature