

**The Career Histories and Professional Aspirations of
Women Deputy Headteachers: An Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis**

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ABSTRACT

The Career Histories and Professional Aspirations of Women Deputy Headteachers: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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This thesis presents an in-depth, idiographic analysis of the lived experiences and perceptions of women deputy headteachers: a relatively under-researched professional group. The study aimed to explore the ways in which twelve women deputy headteachers, as potential aspirants to headship, perceived the secondary headteacher role. Given the persistent under-representation of women in secondary headship, it sought to investigate participants' career histories and how these had informed their professional aspirations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve participants. All interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Three super-ordinate themes emerged from the data: 'managing constraint', 'motivating forces' and 'perceptions of secondary headship and the future'. Detailing different aspects of the deputies' experiences, the themes highlighted the complexity of the women's impressions of secondary headship, the heterogeneity among potential headteacher aspirants and the importance of critical reflection while deciding one's professional future.

Drawing on Margaret Archer's theory of reflexivity as a mediatory mechanism between structural forces and human agency, this thesis proposes three types of potential headteacher aspirant: 'the strategic and decisive leader', 'the values-oriented professional' and 'the person-centred educator'. These ideal types illustrate the heterogeneous ways in which a small sample of women deputies had reflected on, positioned themselves towards and navigated their way through their careers in secondary education. This typology together with the nuanced analysis advanced throughout this thesis offers a unique contribution to knowledge.

Various implications for practice and research are discussed. I conclude by arguing that the under-representation of women in secondary headship is a complex phenomenon, and that the career narratives of individual potential aspirants deserve a place at the heart of our theorising and understanding of it. The findings reported in this thesis may be of interest to potential headteacher aspirants as well as those tasked with identifying and training tomorrow's leaders.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my grandfather, Thomas Hughes, who passed away at the beginning of my PhD studies. His love of learning, constant smile and sense of humour are greatly missed. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my daughter, Melody (born September 2016).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
DfE	Department for Education
FTSE	Financial Times Stock Exchange
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
NAHT	The National Association of Headteachers
NASUWT	The National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers
NCSL	National College for School 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
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
UN	United Nations
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Agency	Throughout this thesis, the term “agency” is used to refer to an individual’s “capacity for willed (voluntary) action” (Scott and Marshall, 2009, p. 11).
Aspiration	Drawing on the work of Young and McLeod (2001), I use the term “aspiration” to refer to what an individual hopes to accomplish during their career, the type of professional identities and behaviours they wish to perform and the types of posts they may be interested in applying for in the future. An individual’s professional aspirations are perceived as being informed by a variety of factors including, but not limited to, their career history and experiences, their values and belief systems, their own agentic action as well as their life outside work. One’s professional aspirations are subject to change over time.
Career	For the purposes of this thesis, the term “career” is defined as “a patterned sequence of occupational roles through which individuals move over the course of a working life” (Scott and Marshall, 2009, p. 61). Career moves tend to be associated with increased status and monetary rewards, yet the definition advanced within this thesis does not exclude the possibility of an individual changing occupations, or moving downwards or horizontally across an organisation or sector during their working lives.
Deputy Headteacher	The terms “deputy headteacher” and “deputy headship” are used frequently throughout this thesis. “Deputy headteachers” are referred to as “assistant principals” in the US (see, for example, Petrides and Jimes, 2014), “deputy principals” in Australia (see, for example, Cranston et al., 2004) and “vice principals” both in other education systems and some English schools (see, for example, Kwan, 2011). These senior leaders are directly below the headteacher or principal in the school hierarchy, and occupy a prominent position in a school’s leadership team. They have been defined by the UK government as playing “a major role in managing the school, particularly in the absence of the headteacher” (The National Archives, 2016).

Gender	Gender refers to socially and culturally constructed ideas regarding what it is to be male or female in our society. Derived from perceived differences between the sexes, gender not only refers to “individual identity and personality but also, at the symbolic level, to cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and, at the structural level, to the sexual division of labour in institutions and organisations” (Scott and Marshall, 2009, p. 276).
Headship	Throughout this study, the term “headship” is used to designate the post fulfilled by a “headteacher”. In some of the literature I cite, the synonyms “principalship” and “principal” are used. Headteachers have been defined by the UK government as having “overall responsibility for the school, its staff, its pupils and the education they receive” (The National Archives, 2016).
Secondary School	This thesis focuses solely on women deputy headteachers working in state-run secondary schools in England. These typically cater for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years of age. At the time of writing, mainstream, state secondary education in England is made up of different types of school. These include faith schools which are affiliated with a particular religion, community schools which are run by the local council, academy schools and free schools which are independent from local authority control, and grammar schools which are academically selective.
Sex	This term is used throughout the thesis to refer to the biological differences that categorise an individual as female or male.
Structure	Social structures refer to “any recurring pattern of social behaviour; or, more specifically, to the ordered interrelationships between different elements of a social system or society” (Scott and Marshall, 2009, p. 740 – 741). For Anthony Giddens (1979), ‘structures’ are “rules and resources” produced and reproduced by human agents (p. 64). Giddens’ definition of structure is explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Gender is just one of the ways in which individuals can be marginalised in accessing and exercising leadership but its influence and impact is pervasive both throughout time and across national borders.

(Coleman, 2007, p. 383)

Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I outline the aims and rationale for this study. Having reflected on its timely nature, I then move on to situate my research in its broader social, political and research context. Here I consider the development of the feminist movement, the advancement of women's rights as well as the ways in which the field of gender and educational leadership research has evolved over time. Noting that reflexively situating oneself as a researcher is essential when conducting phenomenological research (Shaw, 2010), I then present a personal reflection on my chosen research project. I conclude this chapter by providing an overview of the remaining thesis.

The aims of the study

This qualitative study explores the career histories and professional aspirations of twelve women deputy headteachers working in state-funded secondary schools in England. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996), it seeks to investigate the ways in which my participants, as potential aspirants to headship, perceive, understand and make sense of the secondary headteacher role. Specifically, my research focuses on the particularity of individuals' lived experiences and how these influence the likelihood of their aspiring towards headship. The data reported on in this thesis was collected between March 2014 and January 2015. This process was guided by the following open and exploratory research questions:

- How do women deputy headteachers make sense of their career histories?

- How do women deputy headteachers experience deputy headship?
- How do women deputy headteachers perceive secondary headship?
- How do women deputy headteachers envisage their future professional selves?

Rationale

The rationale for this study stems from two significant issues in educational leadership research. The first of these concerns the persistent under-representation of women in secondary headship. Despite the numerical domination of women in the teaching profession (both in England and across the globe), men continue to hold the majority of headteacher posts (DfE, 2015a). Indeed, the educational press report that an estimated 1,700 women headteachers are ‘missing’ from England’s schools (see, for example, Vaughan, 2015), and that, at the current rate of progress, the proportion of women headteachers in our secondary schools will not match that of women teachers until 2040 (Ward, 2016). The ongoing under-representation of women headteachers in our secondary schools is cause for concern. It sends the stereotypical message to young people that leadership “means men” (Reay and Ball, 2000, p. 145).

Argued to be “surprisingly similar across countries and cultures” (Shakeshaft, 2006, p. 500), the variety of factors shaping and constraining senior women’s career paths are well documented. They are reported to include responsibilities to children and other dependents (see, for example, Conley and Jenkins, 2011), and the stereotypical alignment of leadership with masculinity (see, for example, Reay and Ball, 2000), as well as negative perceptions of the headteacher role (see, for example, Oplatka and Tamir, 2009). In addition to identifying potential impediments to secondary headship, scholars have highlighted several factors that motivate women to pursue educational leadership. These enabling influences are said to include the support of networks and mentors (see, for

example, Coleman, 2010), and sense of vocation and a social justice agenda (see, for example, Fuller, 2012), as well as leadership development programmes and opportunities (see, for example, McNamara et al., 2010). In the next chapter of this thesis (Chapter 2), I will explore the constraining and enabling influences shaping women's careers in greater detail. This lengthy discussion reveals that many of the existing studies concerned with the obstacles and facilitating factors women encounter on the road to educational leadership focus on the views and experiences of existing headteachers: those women who have already achieved headship status. The views and aspirations of deputy headteachers have received relatively little academic attention (Harris et al., 2003). The research project described in this thesis focuses specifically on the career trajectories and experiences of women deputy headteachers. I argue that, as potential aspirants to headship, women deputies have the capability to offer new insights into some of the reasons why women deputies may or may not progress to headship.

The second issue on which my rationale is based concerns the reported challenges of headteacher succession and recruitment in England. Research suggests that headship roles are becoming increasingly unattractive to potential aspirants (see, for example, Bush, 2015; The Future Leaders Trust, 2016). The National College for School Leadership (2007) identify several reasons for this, including the perception among some educators that headship requires its incumbents to conform to a "rigorous regime of accountability" and meet the demands of an overwhelming, burdensome workload (p. 6). Furthermore, research suggests that headteacher recruitment and retention may be more challenging in schools serving low socio-economic catchments due to the impression that heads working in such communities are at greater risk from failure and job loss than those in more affluent areas (see, for example, Courtney, 2013). These ideas, explored in greater detail in Chapter 2, suggest that a number of factors may be acting to deter middle leaders, assistant headteachers and deputy headteachers from climbing the occupational ladder. My study aims to explore women deputy headteachers' perceptions of secondary headship, and the ways in which they envisage their future professional selves. The in-depth and idiographic exploration of my participants' accounts featured within this

thesis seeks to provide insights into how these potential headteacher aspirants perceive both the affordances and disincentives of secondary headship.

So far this introductory chapter has outlined the aims and rationale of the study. The following section endeavours to locate my study within the context of social change and gender and educational leadership research.

Feminism, social change and educational leadership research

Writing this introduction in the summer of 2016 has given me the opportunity to reflect on the progress that we as a society have made towards gender equality over the past hundred years. On the one hand, a lot has been accomplished. Women have won the right to vote and have been granted the ability to control their own fertility via reliable and readily available means of contraception (Smith, 2016; Hakim, 2000). In the professional arena, women have been granted paid maternity leave, the right to return to work after having a child, the right to equal pay and the right to work in a professional environment free from sexual harassment and discrimination (Browne, 2006). Yet, on the other hand, gender inequalities persist. Worldwide, women earn on average 24 per cent less than their male colleagues (UN Women, 2015, p. 10), and men continue to outnumber women in the most senior leadership positions in our society, including those in education (Vinnicombe et al., 2015; The Centre for Women and Democracy, 2014; Baker and Cracknell, 2014). Progress is slow, and there is more work to do if we are to put an end to gender-based inequality in our society.

The field of gender and educational leadership research has evolved over the past fifty years. Its history, as documented by Oplatka (2016), reveals several shifts in the ways in which scholars have thought about and researched the under-representation of women in senior leadership posts. Below, I endeavour to trace the development of this field of inquiry and signpost the social and cultural changes which have shaped its development. In doing so, I aim to situate my study in a wider social and research context.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century feminists sought civil and political equality, including votes for women. Occurring between 1830 and 1920, first-wave feminism was characterised by “its grounding in a classical rights perspective and its focus on campaigns for women’s enfranchisement” (Kemp and Squires, 1997, p. 1). After women won the right to vote in 1928, active feminism declined (Scott and Marshall, 2009, p. 251). Yet, during the Second World War (1939-1945), “90% of single women and 80% of married women” were conscripted to work in factories or on the land (Fawcett Society, 2016, p. 6). This move towards the labour market marked a distinct shift away from the roles and responsibilities of the domestic sphere. Although public and professional life returned to a predominantly male domain following the war, the increased freedoms experienced during WWII are said to have influenced the women’s liberation movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Coleman, 2011, p. 8). While first-wave feminists fought for political enfranchisement and equality, those influenced by second-wave feminism sought “‘liberation’ from the oppressiveness of a patriarchally defined society” and questioned “the meanings attached to the bald fact of biological difference” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 144). Bunkle (2016) argues that central to the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s was the idea that “private suffering is not a purely personal matter, but is located in social institutions and power structures” (p. 5). It must be noted, however, that while all second-wave feminists fought for gender equity, “they did not always approach this problem from the same philosophical or political base” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 49). Indeed, the second-wave contained within it diverse strands of thinking; some feminists sought gender *equality* in the labour market, state and public life, while others stressed the *differences* that exist between men and women with some, more radical feminists, believing women to be superior (Coleman, 2011; Freedman, 2002).

During the 1960s and 1970s, numerous social and legal changes took place which sought to advance the cause of gender equality in Britain. For Hakim (2000), the widespread availability of reliable methods of contraception that occurred in the mid to late 1960s was “the most important technical innovation of the 20th century” (p. 44). She argues that this enabled women to take control over

their own fertility and, in turn, their lives. Reforms to British law also sought to address female oppression. Focusing on women's rights in the workplace, The Equal Pay Act (1970), the Employment Protection Act (1975) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) served to enshrine parity in law. Echoing these societal and legal shifts, HEIs introduced gender, feminist and women's studies courses (Oplatka, 2016, p. 13).

In a review of the research conducted on gender in the field of educational management between 1962 and 2013, Oplatka (2016) found that only "four papers focused on women in headship or on women's career advancement in education" during the 1970s (p. 14). Interestingly, all four articles referred to were published in the latter part of the seventies (*ibid.* p. 14). These publications coincided with the introduction of feminist standpoint theory which occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. This is a research philosophy concerned with the "relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power" (Harding, 2004, p. 1). Seeking to "to incorporate 'women's ways of knowing' that have historically been excluded from science" (Hundleby, 1998, p. 27), feminist standpoint theorists make two central claims: (1) that women's experiences of marginalisation have shaped what they know hence their knowledge claims differ from those of men, and (2) the voices and views of marginalised people are able to give researchers a fuller picture of the social world as they are "epistemically privileged" (Wylie, 2004, p. 339). Hirschmann (1998) argued that achieving a standpoint or 'epistemic privilege' "does not come 'naturally' or spontaneously to anyone. Rather, it must be achieved through 'struggle', wherein lies its 'liberatory' potential" (p. 75). It should be noted however that the concept of 'epistemic privilege' is contested. Intemann (2010), for instance, states that claiming that women as a whole have epistemic privilege has been "charged with reinforcing gender stereotypes and falsely assuming that all women or oppressed groups have some sort of universal shared experiences ... in virtue of being oppressed" (p. 783).

The 1980s saw statutory maternity pay introduced (Fawcett Society, 2016, p. 4). This decade also saw increased numbers of scholars focusing on the gender

differences between male and female headteachers (Oplatka, 2016). As Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) note, many of the studies that emerged in this decade “compared female and male administrative styles and behaviour, and were undertaken in an effort to accumulate a knowledge base that would document female capability as equal to or better than male capability” (p. 33). This endeavour appears to be in-keeping with the thinking behind feminist standpoint theory explored above. Writing in 1989, Shakeshaft observed that only in the 1980s had there “begun to be a literature about women in school administration, and only in the past couple of years have scholars begun talking about examining current theory and practice for the impact of gender” (p. 9).

The 1990s signaled a new wave of feminism. Third-wave feminists “emphasised the importance of individuality and diverse personal experiences when defining their own politics” (Mahoney, 2016, p. 1). Differentiating themselves from the previous wave, third-wave feminists argued that the second-wave generation focused too exclusively on the voices of white, middle class women and had made essentialist and reductionist assumptions (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004; Coleman, 2011). Third-wave feminism endeavoured to be anti-essentialist and intersectional, a term explored at length in the following chapter. It engaged with “global and multicultural feminisms” as well as anti-racism and transgender politics to include diverse and divergent views (Oplatka, 2016, p. 20). Reacting against the “victimhood” they saw as being entrenched within second-wave feminism, the third-wave generation focused on individuals and their capacity to act within and in response to structural constraint (Coleman, 2011, p. 10).

The third-wave drew inspiration from the thinking underpinning post-structuralism. Feminist poststructuralists work to “deconstruct the hegemonic assumption that we are whole and coherent subjects with a unified sense of identity” (Weedon, 1997, p. 174). They suggest that our identities, gendered or otherwise, are heterogeneous, fluid and sites of ongoing construction. Poststructuralists emphasised the significant role that social and organisational contexts play in shaping our subjectivities and determining the variety of subject positions available to us as individuals (Ford, 2006, p. 79). These concerns are

perhaps reflected in the gender and educational leadership research that was produced during the 1990s. This decade saw an increase in the number of gender related papers published in the field of educational leadership (Oplatka, 2016). This research paid greater attention than that produced in previous decades to women leaders, their lives and career trajectories (*ibid.* p. 20). As Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) observe, gender and educational leadership research “began to move away from comparisons of women and men toward understanding the worlds of women” (p. 33). The field started to concern itself with the lived experiences of women leaders.

In Chapter 3, I outline the feminist perspective I adopt throughout this thesis. Like Fuller (2013, p. 5), it is a perspective simultaneously concerned with equality and difference. I believe that feminism has continued relevance in our society. Yet, as Coleman (2011) notes, women in the 21st century appear reluctant to identify themselves as ‘feminists’. She writes:

The historical identification of feminism with Women’s Lib in the 1970s means that it is seen as old-fashioned in the twenty-first century ... There appears to be a backlash against feminism and particularly against positive discrimination or affirmative action for women (Coleman, 2011, p. 11).

Some commentators however suggest that, instead of living in a ‘post-feminist’ age, our society could be experiencing a new, fourth-wave of feminism (see for example, Cochrane, 2013). Harnessing the power of social media to challenge global injustice, fourth-wave feminists are said to “blend the micropolitics that characterised much of the third-wave with an agenda that seeks change in political, social and economic structures much like the second-wave” (Maclaren, 2015, p. 1734).

During the first part of the 21st century, the field of gender and educational research has matured to become a robust, international body of research incorporating diverse methodologies and theoretical perspectives (Oplatka, 2016, p. 25). During this time, there has been increased interest in the career decision-making, perceptions and occupational aspirations of individual women

leaders (*ibid.* p. 29). The research reported on in this thesis reflects this trend, and attempts to shed light on the career trajectories and professional aspirations of individual women deputy headteachers.

Research studies do not occur in a vacuum divorced from social, cultural and political shifts. This section has endeavoured to situate my study in the context of both social change and the field of gender and educational leadership research. The next part of this chapter offers an autobiographical account of myself as an early career researcher and my interest in the career trajectories of women leaders.

An autobiographical reflection

My interest in gender and educational leadership stems from my experiences both as a student and secondary school English teacher. The impetus for this study also developed out of my sense of bewilderment and frustration that, in the second decade of the twenty first century, gender inequality persists. Foucault wrote:

Each time I have attempted to do theoretical work it has been on the basis of elements from my experience – always in relation to processes that I saw taking place around me. It is in fact because I thought I recognised something cracked, dully jarring or disfunctioning ... that I undertook a particular piece of work (Foucault cited in Ball, 2001, p. 210).

For me, the under-representation of women in secondary headship is evidence that something is 'cracked' or 'disfunctioning' in both our education system and society at large. The autobiographical reflection below aims to illustrate my motivation to study the careers of women deputy headteachers, as well as my personal relationship to the topic (this is a practice recommended by Finlay, 2002b).

I am a white, heterosexual woman, from the Midlands of England, who was born into a working class family. Growing up, my dad was a delivery driver and my mum was a stay-at-home parent. It wasn't until I was at secondary school that mum undertook full-time employment. I cannot remember wanting to be anything

other than a teacher. My parents encouraged this ambition, believing teaching to be a stable, reputable and perhaps aspirational occupation. By the time I was sixteen, it was almost inevitable that I would go on to do my A-Levels and complete the undergraduate and postgraduate courses necessary to become a teacher.

Not many people in my family had gone to university. The very few that had an undergraduate degree had stayed at home while studying, or had completed their degree part-time alongside paid employment. While completing my A-Levels, I accepted a place to study Education and English. This meant that I must move away from home, and navigate an academic and social culture with which I was completely unfamiliar. While I was at university, I spent three years believing that the admissions board had made a mistake in offering me a place. I felt sure that there had been some form of administrative error and that I would eventually be escorted off the premises having been exposed as somebody who did not belong, academically or socially. Despite my fear of failure, I took a lot away from my studies. It was during this time that I was introduced to the gender issues ingrained within our education system and started to identify as a 'feminist' with a strong belief in equality. The lecturers enabled me to see gender dynamics in our society which, until then, I was largely unaware of. Following these formative experiences, I went on to explore the differences between boys' and girls' perceptions of Literacy and English. I wrote my undergraduate and Master's dissertations on this topic. I also came away from my studies with strong beliefs about what education is and who it is for. I came to the conclusion that education is hope or, in other words, the means by which we can transform both our own lives and the life chances of the next generation. In light of its power, I came to passionately believe that everybody, regardless of background or circumstance, should be able to access a high quality education; schools and other educational institutions should promote and embody the spirit of equality.

Before training to become an English teacher, I completed a Master's degree in Educational Research and worked as a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) in a large urban secondary school. Both experiences were to have a great influence

on my future career decision-making. Postgraduate study opened my eyes to the possibilities of qualitative research and to doing a PhD at some point in the future, while the experience of working as an LSA confirmed my aspiration to teach. Interestingly, it was during my time as an LSA that I first witnessed the gendered nature of the teaching profession. All of my fellow LSAs were female, as were the majority of the teachers whose classes I was timetabled to work in. It was only as I looked upwards towards the upper echelons of the school hierarchy did I see that the school was largely led by men.

Following my time as an LSA, I trained to become a teacher via the Teach First programme. I was attracted to this route because it would enable me to train 'on the job' and, in keeping with Teach First's vision, I felt very strongly that educational success should not be dictated by socio-economic background. When I started the programme, however, I became very aware of and somewhat apprehensive about the 'leadership development' component of the programme. As new participants, we were told that over the next two years we would undertake "business skills training" and would be in regular contact with somebody who would be my "Leadership Development Officer (LDO)". In the initial few weeks of the programme, I began to reflect on the meaning of the word "leadership" and the extent to which I aspired towards or could ever imagine myself to be a "leader". As a Teach First participant, I attended compulsory training sessions with "leadership" in the title and even reflected on the leadership practices in my school, but while I was engaged in the process of training to be a teacher I was too tired, too overworked and too preoccupied with the day-to-day business of teaching to reflect in the way that I once had. It was only towards the end of my two years on the programme that I looked up from my day-to-day life as a teacher, and questioned what I wanted from my future career. As part of a reflective exercise, we were required to formulate a 'career plan' and write down our career aspirations following the Teach First programme. I found this to be very difficult and was confronted with a series of questions: 'Did I want to stay in the classroom?', 'Did I want to be a senior leader at some point in my career?', 'What other options were open to me?' While I contemplated my answers to these questions, I looked to the senior leadership team in my own school. Once again,

I was confronted with a male dominated leadership team: a male headteacher and mostly male deputies. Intrigued by what I saw, I found myself accessing the school workforce data in England. I was shocked to find men continue to outnumber women at the secondary headteacher level across the country. That weekend I abandoned the career plan that I was asked to produce, and started work on my PhD proposal.

Structure of the thesis

The remaining thesis is organised in the following way. The next chapter, Chapter 2, explores extant literature and theory concerned with the position of women in the global and national labour market. Specifically, I explore the constraining and enabling factors which women are reported to encounter on the road to secondary headship. Noting the complex interrelationship between structure and agency within this body of literature, the final section of this chapter explores the work of Anthony Giddens and Margaret Archer.

Chapter 3 outlines my research design and methodological decisions. Here I explore the aims, research questions, feminist politics and ethics adopted throughout this study. The chapter presents my ontological and epistemological stance, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, the methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the techniques used to collect and analyse my interview data. Here I aim to highlight the utility of IPA in examining the career histories and professional aspirations of individual women deputies. I argue that IPA should be included in the repertoire of approaches used to study gender and educational leadership. The chapter concludes by exploring the issues of reflexivity and 'quality' in qualitative research.

In Chapter 4, I critically reflect on the challenges of capturing the complexities and idiosyncrasies of individuals' career narratives within the confines of this thesis. Noting the advantages of poetic representation, I present twelve poems, one for each of the women I interviewed. These poems offer a snapshot of my participants' lived experiences, sense making and concerns.

Chapter 5 explores, analyses and theorises the findings of this research project. Here I argue that my participants' career histories and professional aspirations have been shaped by both structural forces and their own agentic capacity to act. The chapter highlights the heterogeneity that exists between my participants' narratives, and the ways in which they perceived potential constraints and their freedom to choose a career trajectory for themselves. Through the lens of Archer's theory of reflexivity as a mediatory mechanism between agency and structure, I propose three different types of potential headteacher aspirant: (1) the autonomous potential aspirant or the strategic and decisive leader, (2) the meta-reflexive potential aspirant or the values-oriented professional and (3) the communicative potential aspirant or the person-centred educator.

Finally, Chapter 6 considers the main messages and conclusions of this study. Here I discuss the implications of the research presented in this thesis, suggest areas for further research and reflect on my doctoral journey. Overall, I suggest that the lived experiences and sense making of individual women deputies, as potential aspirants to headship, provide an alternative perspective on the affordances and disincentives of secondary headship. I argue that their career narratives and perceptions deserve a prominent place in our ongoing investigations into the under-representation of women in educational leadership.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender equality is a human rights obligation that remains vastly unfulfilled.

(UN Women, 2015, p. 234)

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced my research and described the overall structure of this thesis. This second chapter is concerned with what is known about women teachers, their career histories and professional aspirations. It begins by exploring women's position in both the international and UK labour market. Noting that women continue to be under-represented in leadership positions across the globe, the chapter then focuses specifically on the teaching profession and the representation of women in secondary headship. The second section of this chapter focuses on theories and empirical studies concerned with the constraints that women face throughout their careers, as well as the enabling factors that influence their career decision-making. It explores a variety of issues including family responsibilities, stereotyping and generalisation, social and cultural expectations, agentic action and self-confidence. The final section of the chapter focuses on the concepts of agency, structure and reflexivity. Here I explore Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, and Margaret Archer's work on the internal conversation. This third section critically assesses the applicability of each theorist's work to my project on the perceptions and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. I conclude this chapter by outlining my theoretical framework.

Literature review search strategy

The following databases were used to search for relevant literature: British Education Index (BEI), Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Australian Education Index (AEI), Business Source Premier, Emerald and PsyINFO. All databases were searched using the terms found in Appendix 1. These search terms were generated using my research questions as a guide. These can be found in the previous chapter.

Women and the labour market

The UN Women's report *Progress of the World's Women* (2015) shows that sex-based segregation in the workplace - both 'horizontal' segregation in which men and women are employed in different occupations, and 'vertical' segregation in which men and women occupy different levels of the same organization - is "prevalent and has a strikingly similar pattern across developed and developing regions" (p. 89 - 90). The authors report that across the globe women continue to be over-represented in low paid and low status employment, and that this has a negative impact on women's socio-economic and political standing. The relative absence of women in managerial positions is described within the report as "a waste of human talent" (*ibid.* p. 90) and a factor contributing to a global pay gap in which, on average, women earn "just half as much income as men over their lifetimes" (*ibid.* p.11).

The European Commission (2015) state that "equality between women and men is a fundamental right and a precondition for effective democracy and lasting economic growth" (p. 5). Yet statistics concerning women's participation in the European labour market suggest that there is a long way to go until gender equality in the workplace is achieved. Despite women surpassing the academic achievements of their male peers at both school and university (OECD, 2015), as well as representing 60% of all university graduates in the European Union (European Commission, 2013, p. 2), employed women across Europe are four times more likely to be working part-time than employed men (European Commission, 2015, p. 7). Furthermore, taking into account variation between member states, on average women receive a lower hourly wage than their male counterparts (European Commission, 2015, p. 15). Statistics show that as well as being under-represented in full-time, lucrative employment, women are also under-represented in high profile leadership positions. For instance, women comprise only 28% of elected members of national parliaments (European Commission, 2015, p. 15) and are poorly represented on corporate boards (Vinnicombe et al., 2015). The over-representation of men in such roles arguably reinforces gender stereotypes.

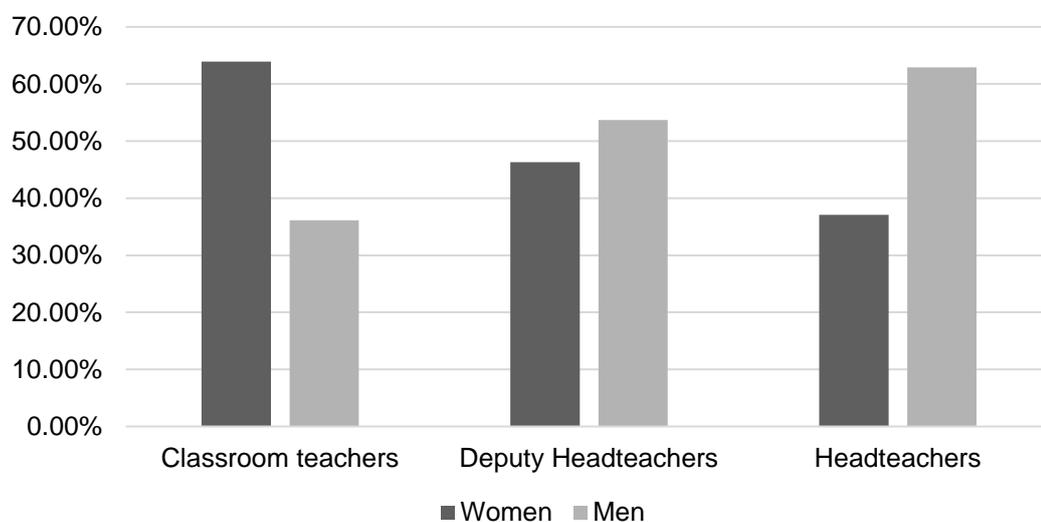
The Equal Pay Act (1970), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Employment Protection Act (1975) enshrined women's employment rights in British law (Browne, 2006). Despite these acts being passed over forty years ago, this legislation however "has not resulted in radical change" (Coleman, 2002, p. 2). Gender disparity in the UK labour market persists. The Centre for Women and Democracy (2014) report that women account for only 23% of members of parliament and 33% of local councillors (p. 6). The authors conclude that "at the current rate of progress, a child born today will be drawing her pension before she has any chance of being equally represented in the parliament of her country" (*ibid.* p. 9). *The Female FTSE Board Report 2015* shows that men also outnumber women in corporate life. The authors found that while there are no longer all-male boards in the UK and that women currently represent 23.5% of FTSE 100 board members, only 4.6% of directors in FTSE 250 companies, and 8.6% of FTSE 100 directors are women (Vinnicombe et al., 2015, p. 31 - 46). There is evidence to suggest that the under-representation of women is also present in public life and the professions. Baker and Cracknell (2014), for instance, explored a variety of occupational sectors and found men to be over-represented in leadership positions in numerous fields. These included the judicial profession in which women account for only 24% of judges in England and Wales, the armed forces in which only 13% of officers are women, and the police force in which women comprise only 18% of police chief inspectors. The authors found that "in very few" of the occupational sectors they examined did "women exceed the 51% of the UK population that they represent" (*ibid.* p. 1). This therefore suggests a clear pattern of women's under-representation in the upper echelons of organisations. Having explored the position of women in the international and UK labour market, the next part of this chapter discusses the representation of women in the teaching profession.

Women in the teaching profession

The teaching profession is traditionally associated with and dominated by women (Drudy, 2008; Raggl and Troman, 2008; Moreau et al., 2007). The most recent school workforce data in England (DfE, 2015a) confirm women's numerical domination of this occupational sector; women constitute 87% and 63.9% of all

classroom teachers in state-funded primary and secondary schools respectively. Yet, despite making up over half of all classroom teachers, women continue to be under-represented at the secondary headteacher level. In November 2014, only 37.1% of secondary school headteachers in state-funded secondary schools were women (DfE, 2015a). Figure 1 shows the percentages of men and women at the teacher, deputy headteacher and headteacher level in England. While examining these statistics however it must be borne in mind that the proportion of men and women in secondary headship has been shown to vary across regions; Fuller’s (2009) analysis shows that in the London boroughs and Metropolitan districts such as Merseyside and the West Midlands women were equally represented and, in some areas, outnumbered men in headship posts, while in other areas of the country women headteachers continued to be a minority.

Figure 1: *Percentage of staff in state-funded secondary schools in England by gender*



Source: DfE, 2015a

Figure 1 indicates that smaller proportions of women than men progress hierarchically to each stage of leadership in state - funded secondary schools (Allen and Rawal, 2013). This is troubling as the disproportionate representation of men in secondary headship potentially models unjust gender relations and

leadership practices to young people (Fuller, 2015), reinforces gender stereotypes and sends the message to women teachers that secondary school management is inaccessible (Harris et al., 2003). Figure 1 also illustrates a relative equity between the proportion of men and women at the deputy headteacher level compared to those holding secondary headteacher posts. This statistic appears to suggest that some women deputy headteachers are actively choosing not to pursue headship or that other factors are conspiring to exclude or discourage them.

Deputy headteachers as ‘forgotten leaders’

In comparison to their headteacher colleagues, the views, careers and aspirations of deputy headteachers have received little academic attention (Harris et al., 2003; Harvey, 1994; Lee et al., 2009; Ribbins, 1997). This is despite the significant role that deputy headteachers play in school life (Kwan, 2011) and the unique position deputies find themselves in to “observe first-hand the various role dynamics” of headship (Cranston, 2007, p.110). In the relative absence of empirical studies concerned solely with deputy headteachers and their experiences, Cranston et al. (2004) characterise this professional group as “forgotten leaders” (p. 225). The ‘forgotten’ status of deputy headteachers however is perhaps surprising given that they make up a potential pool of headteacher candidates, and that the number of tomorrow’s headteachers will be determined by the perceptions, aspirations and intentions of today’s potential aspirants i.e. deputy headteachers (Cranston, 2007; Lee et al., 2009).

It is commonly assumed that those occupying deputy headships aspire towards headship and “that their current role is an important stage in their development as a potential headteacher” (Harris et al., 2003, p. 9). In a Scottish study of ten deputies conducted by Draper and McMichael (1998), the authors posit that “by the time secondary school teachers have risen to deputy status most have already planned to pursue their careers to the top” (p. 16). Some existing research focusing on deputy headteachers however suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Cranston (2007), for instance, examined deputy principals’ perceptions of ‘the top job’ via a questionnaire that was administered in

Queensland, Australia. He explored potential aspirants' career intentions and the factors influencing their decisions. Cranston found that only half of the sample intended to apply for headship (*ibid.* p. 118). This suggests that not all deputy headteachers perceive headship to be a desirable career option. Other research conducted in the 1990s suggests relatively low job satisfaction among deputies, and therefore raises questions about the likelihood of an individual seeking promotion when dissatisfied with their current post. An Australian study conducted by Harvey (1994) found that up to one-fifth of primary school deputies were dissatisfied with their current role (p. 17). They perceived themselves to be "dogsbodyes" and a "jack of all trades" (*ibid.* p. 17). Similarly, in a study of thirty four primary and secondary deputy headteachers in England, Ribbins (1997) reported that several of his headteacher interviewees found deputy headship to be "a great disappointment" and "very frustrating" (p. 301). Some participants blamed their line managers for these feelings, and several believed "what they had learnt as deputy heads from the example of their headteachers had more to do with 'how not to do' than 'how to do' headship" (*ibid.* p. 303).

The literature concerned with deputy headship reveals a perception that schools tend to "seek a gender balance for deputy heads" (Coleman, 2002, p. 125). This may account for the relative gender equity reported to be present at the deputy headship level (see Figure 1, page 17). It is interesting to note however that, despite claims of equity in the distribution of deputy roles and responsibilities, some studies suggest that women holding deputy headships feel under more pressure to 'prove themselves' than their male counterparts (Harris et al., 2003, p. 13). While reviewing the literature pertaining solely to deputy headteachers, I found studies of women deputy headteachers to be fairly rare. The majority of those found were conducted in the 1980s. In her study of thirty eight women deputies in the North of England, Grant (1989) found that "promotion for its own sake was not at the top of the career agenda" for the women she interviewed, and that "their career moves were prompted by concerns relating to job satisfaction and strongly conditioned by factors outside their control" (p. 123). Furthermore, Grant reported that very few of the women in her sample were what she terms 'career ambitious': the vast majority did not perceive the pursuit of

'power' as guiding their career decision-making. Interestingly, Grant's interviewees were dismissive of gender stereotyping within the teaching profession and "were quick to say that they were not in charge of 'tampons and flowers'" as female deputy heads (*ibid.* p. 124). Divergent findings were reported by McBurney and Hough (1989) in their small scale study of ten women deputy headteachers. The authors found that all of the women deputy headteachers interviewed reported experiencing "stereotyped expectations from staff" which aligned them with pastoral roles and responsibilities. Their participants did note however that they had perceived fewer stereotypical assumptions and expectations during "more recent" job applications (*ibid.* p. 117). The authors concluded that, although women appeared to be guided towards pastoral work more often than their male counterparts, women's career paths were no longer "being restricted to responsibility for traditional female areas of the curriculum" (*ibid.* p. 117). This conclusion is supported by Coleman's (2002) seminal study of the views of headteachers in England and Wales. Despite the stereotypical alignment with femininity and the pastoral, she found that 53.6% of her female survey respondents had been responsible for the curriculum during their time as deputy headteachers, compared to only 37.7% who had fulfilled pastoral posts (*ibid.* p. 24).

In a more recent study, Oplatka and Tamir (2009) conducted research focusing on Israeli women deputy headteachers. The researchers interviewed women deputies who did not aspire to headship and therefore planned to stay in their current roles. This decision, the authors argue, "is in sharp contrast with widespread beliefs on career aspiration and advancement" (*ibid.* p. 216). Yet, by focusing exclusively on deputies who do not explicitly aspire to headship, Oplatka and Tamir concerned themselves with only one position you may find yourself in as a deputy headteacher. It remains unknown whether those women deputy headteachers who aspire to and apply for headteacher roles also perceive there to be disincentives ingrained within the 'top job' and, if so, what is it that motivates them to aspire towards headship regardless.

Kwan's (2011) questionnaire study of secondary school vice principals in Hong Kong found that, unlike Oplatka and Tamir's (2009) study of Israeli deputies, women were just as motivated as their male counterparts to aspire towards and apply for headship. This finding is in sharp contrast to those of other studies focusing on deputy headteachers and their career aspirations. For instance, in a mixed methods study conducted in primary and secondary schools in England and Wales, James and Whiting (1998a, 1998b) investigated the career perspectives of deputy headteachers. A typology of five aspirants emerged:

Figure 2: *A typology of deputy headteacher aspirants*

<p>Active aspirants: deputy headteachers who were actively seeking headship at the time of the survey.</p> <p>Potential aspirants: deputy headteachers who had not, at the time of the survey, applied for headship but envisaged themselves doing so in the future.</p> <p>Unpredictables: deputy headteachers who had applied for headship in the past and were unsure whether they will continue doing so in the future.</p> <p>Settlers: deputy headteachers who had never applied for headship and did not envisage themselves doing so in the future.</p> <p>Unavailed aspirants: deputy headteachers who had applied for headship in the past and would not be doing so again in the future.</p>
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Source: James and Whiting, 1998a, p. 12; James and Whiting, 1998b, p. 356

The authors found there to be proportionally more women deputy headteachers from both primary and secondary sectors in the 'settlers' category than any other, while more male deputy headteachers were found in the 'active aspirant' category (James and Whiting, 1998a, p. 13). Interestingly, none of the women deputy headteachers who worked in secondary schools at the time of the survey were actively pursuing headship (*ibid.* p. 13). Drawing on an extensive range of sources including this study, Harris et al. (2003) conclude that women deputy headteachers "are less likely to seek promotion to headship than men irrespective of experience or capability" (p. 13). This conclusion is echoed by other researchers in the field (see, for example, McNamara et al. 2010).

Many of the empirical studies cited above were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s. While these studies are relevant to my study and tell us something about the experience of deputy headship, more up-to-date research focusing on deputy

headteachers - and women deputy headteachers in particular - is needed. Furthermore, many of the studies conducted since 2000 which focus solely on deputies tend to have been conducted outside of England in countries such as Israel, China and Australia (see, for example, Oplatka and Tamir, 2009; Kwan, 2011; Cranston, 2007). Arguably, women deputy headteachers' career decision-making is framed and shaped by the educational culture in which they work. Educational policy therefore could be seen as creating the conditions in which individuals form their professional aspirations. The educational landscape in England is one that has experienced "a period of tumultuous change" under the relatively recent Coalition government (Lightman, 2015, p. 15). Structural changes such as those brought about by the Academies Act 2010 have arguably created an educational landscape in England that is characterised by accountability and centralised control on the one hand, and autonomy and marketisation on the other (Glatter, 2012; Whitty, 2008; Earley, 2013). This educational climate is therefore potentially very different to both those in other educational contexts around the world and the educational landscape which existed in England in the twentieth century i.e. the contexts in which the majority of research into deputy headteachers' careers and aspirations was both designed and undertaken. Consequently, research conducted at this particular educational moment in England has the potential to be quite different to that which has been conducted in different geographical locations and/or time periods.

Balancing constraints

This section focuses on the challenges and constraints faced by women aspiring towards secondary headship. Researchers have explored the persistent under-representation of women in educational leadership in a variety of geographical, political and sociocultural contexts (see, for example, Chabaya et al., 2009; Young and McLeod, 2001; Lacey, 2004; Coleman, 2002). Consequently, there is a strong body of literature identifying and exploring the barriers that women face on the road to headship (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). Argued to be "surprisingly similar across countries and cultures" (Shakeshaft, 2006, p. 500), the medley of factors shaping and constraining senior women's career paths are said to include family and caring responsibilities (see, for example, Coleman,

2002; Moreau et al., 2007; McNamara et al., 2010; Conley and Jenkins, 2011), stereotyping, bias and discrimination (see, for example, Coleman, 2003, 2007; Thornton and Bricheno, 2009; Blackmore et al., 2006), self-perceptions and a lack of confidence (see, for example, Lacey, 2004; Muñoz et al., 2014; Cubillo and Brown, 2003), perceptions of the headteacher role and the educational landscape (see, for example, Oplatka and Tamir, 2009; Smith, 2015; Bush, 2015) and current job satisfaction (see, for example, MacBeath et al., 2009; Cranston, 2007). Draper and McMichael (2003a, p. 190- 192) suggest that the factors that influence our career decision-making can be considered on four levels: (1) systemic (those related to educational policy and the public profile of the role), (2) generic (those related to headship, its opportunities and disincentives), (3) school specific (those concerned with the nature and appeal of particular school environments) and (4) individual (those related to family, socialisation and lived personal experiences). In reviewing the literature on the challenges and constraints facing women teachers and leaders, I will explore factors spanning each of the four levels suggested in this model.

The metaphors of constraint

A number of metaphors are used throughout the literature to illustrate the constraints women face in the workplace. The 'glass ceiling', coined in the 1980s, is arguably the most common of these and is said to illustrate "an invisible barrier for women and minority groups, preventing them from moving up the corporate ladder" (Weyer, 2007, p. 483). Some scholars however believe that the neo-liberal organisations in which we work and the postmodern careers we enact may demand more complex metaphors than the 'glass ceiling'. Eagly and Carli (2007) for instance suggest that the concept of the 'glass ceiling' fails to take into account the complexity of women's careers in numerous ways. The authors' criticisms of this metaphor can be found in Figure 3.

Figure 3: *Criticisms of the glass ceiling metaphor*

- It erroneously implies that women have equal access to entry – level positions.
- It erroneously assumes the presence of an absolute barrier at a specific high level in organisations.
- It erroneously suggests that all barriers to women are difficult to detect and therefore unforeseen.
- It erroneously assumes that there exists a single, homogeneous barrier and thereby ignores the complexity and variety of obstacles that women leaders can face.
- It fails to recognise the diverse strategies that women devise to become leaders.
- It precludes the possibility that women can overcome barriers and become leaders.
- It fails to suggest that thoughtful problem solving can facilitate women’s paths to leadership.

Source: Eagly and Carli, 2007, p. 7

In view of these criticisms, Eagly and Carli (2007) propose the alternative and more complex metaphor of the ‘labyrinth’ to account for women’s limited representation in the upper echelons of organisations. The occupational ‘labyrinth’ through which women pass is said to contain both ‘paths to the top’ and numerous barriers to women’s advancement. It is said to include “no exclusionary laws and few clear-cut, widely endorsed norms of exclusion” (*ibid.* p. 6). Other academics have proposed the technological concept of the ‘firewall’ to explain women’s under-representation in leadership positions (Bendl and Schmidt, 2010). This metaphor is also said to be more complex and fluid than the ‘glass ceiling’ having “the advantage of elasticity and permeability” (*ibid.* p. 629). In addition to the concept of the labyrinth and the firewall, Ryan and Haslam (2005) have suggested that women confront a precarious ‘glass cliff’ in the labour market as they are more likely than their male counterparts to be appointed to leadership positions in “problematic organisational circumstances” (p. 87). It seems therefore that there are numerous metaphors within the literature designed to illustrate the challenges and constraints women face in the labour market. Coleman (2011) argues however that, regardless of the metaphor scholars utilise, “the conclusion is still that discrimination against women

continues and that woman's traditional role in the family is an impediment to career success" (p. 27).

Women, caring and the family

Numerous scholars point to the role that family life, responsibilities and commitments can play in impeding women's career advancement (see, for example, Coleman, 2002; Moreau et al., 2007; McNamara et al., 2010; Conley and Jenkins, 2011). In her survey of women and men headteachers, Coleman (2002) found the most striking difference between male and female respondents to be "the impact their career appears to have had on their family life" (p. 50). It is therefore to literature concerned with women, caring and the family that this chapter now turns.

Caring expectations

Following a quantitative survey of six thousand parents, a series of qualitative interviews and online discussion forums in the UK, The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) found that "the majority of modern parents no longer think about work and childcare in 'traditional' terms. Fathers want to spend more time with their children and parents want to share work and childcare" (Ellison et al., 2009, p. 10). Despite reported changes in their thinking about gender roles within the family, over three quarters of the mothers in the study reported taking primary responsibility for childcare (*ibid.* p. 11) and only 55 percent of father respondents reported taking "two weeks statutory paternity leave when their last child was born" (p. 13). It seems therefore that traditional gender ideologies and vehicles of socialisation in our society continue to dictate sharply differentiated roles for men and women in the family. These discourses hinge on the expectation that women will take responsibility for unpaid (and often undervalued) care within the home, regardless of work commitments or personal preference, and that men will adopt the role of the breadwinner who works within a full – time, uninterrupted and hierarchical model of employment (McKie et al., 2001). Research concerned with gender and educational leadership suggests that, in addition to caring commitments within the home, women are also more

likely than men to take responsibility for day – to – day domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning (Coleman, 2002; Fuller, 2009).

A quantitative survey and series of focus group interviews with teachers in Victoria, Australia found that both male and female respondents felt promotion to headship and its increased responsibilities would have a negative influence on their work – life balance (Lacey, 2004). More women than men however felt that achieving a balance between the personal and professional aspects of their lives was difficult, and that personal circumstances strongly influenced their career aspirations. Lacey (2004) concluded that the extent to which women teachers would consider promotion was determined by a number of family – related factors including: (1) motherhood, (2) the number and age of their children, (3) the needs of their parents, (4) the needs of their spouse and (5) the needs of their spouse’s parents. The finding that women are more likely than their male counterparts to have responsibilities for the care of dependent relatives is echoed across the literature. Coleman (2001) for instance found that among her female headteacher respondents, 31.5% stated that they cared for elderly or other dependent relatives, and these responsibilities “were slightly more prevalent among the over 50s, whose parents might be more likely to need help” (*ibid.* p. 81). Likewise, a Norwegian survey conducted by Gautun and Hagen (2010) found that women were more likely to be engaged in caring for elderly parents than men. They found that, despite good employment policies and care for the elderly in Norway, many respondents felt that caregiving for ageing parents was gendered and came into “conflict with work” (*ibid.* p. 405). Furthermore, the authors found that care obligations to the elderly were “not perceived as being as legitimate as having obligations to small children, and employees often conceal care obligations for parents from their employers” (*ibid.* p. 406).

Teaching: ‘A good job for a woman’

Teaching is traditionally thought of “as a ‘woman’s job’ (Steedman 1985) that fits with family life” (Raggl and Troman, 2008, p. 586). The hours, holidays and pay as well as the nurturance and altruism required of teachers culminate in a profession that is largely perceived to be suitable for women hoping to combine

work and motherhood (Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Thornton and Bricheno, 2009). The lifting of the marriage bar and the introduction of equal pay occurred in teaching long before it reached other occupational sectors (Conley and Jenkins, 2011, p. 489). This appears to suggest that women's presence within and contribution to the profession has been historically valued. Thornton and Bricheno (2009) argue that while women often perceive teaching to be a suitable career, it is "rarely a first choice occupation for men in England" (p. 167). The authors suggest that men generally enter teaching following a negative experience in a different occupational sector or some form of academic failure. Coupled with school workforce data in England that show that men are outnumbered by women at the classroom teacher level (DfE, 2015a), this would appear to suggest that teaching is a more 'feminised' as opposed to 'masculinised' profession. Some scholars however question the notion that teaching is a feminised profession by highlighting the ways in which some educational cultures and institutional practices make it difficult for women to balance motherhood and a career in teaching. Basing her findings on a case study of a primary school in Hong Kong, Chan (2004) found that within a managerialist and entrepreneurial school culture "young single women can be useful resources to be exploited to bolster school development whereas married women with their childbearing capacity become organisational liabilities and have to be excluded" (p. 506). She argues that motherhood and other family responsibilities are discriminated against within a culture single-mindedly concerned with efficiency and improvement. In the same vein, Conley and Jenkins (2011) found that modernisation in the teaching profession since the 1988 Education Reform Act coupled with an increasingly heavy workload has left some mothers in the teaching profession with a choice: "to reduce their hours of work or to leave the profession either permanently or until their care responsibilities are lighter" (*ibid.* p. 500). The authors argue that modernisation agendas in England and Wales have created an "implicit motherhood bar" for women in the teaching profession and that it is becoming "increasingly difficult for them to combine work with starting a family and the ensuing caring responsibilities" (*ibid.* p. 504). Conley and Jenkins (2011) conclude that while the teaching profession is statistically dominated by women and therefore 'feminised'

on paper, the environment in which teachers work “is becoming increasingly masculinised with a long hours working culture that leaves little space for combining work and family responsibilities” (p. 504). Collectively, this evidence suggests that the notion that teaching is a “woman’s job” and therefore compatible with caring responsibilities in the home may be becoming a thing of the past.

The conflict between family commitments and career

There is a large volume of published studies describing the role that motherhood and family commitments play in constraining women teachers’ career advancement (see, for example, Coleman, 2002; Moreau et al., 2007; McNamara et al., 2010). O’Neil et al. (2008) reviewed literature on women’s careers published between 1990 and 2008. The authors found evidence to suggest that both family and career are central components of women’s lives (*ibid.* p. 730). This body of research however does not suggest that family life is an inconsequential element of male lived experience, but rather that women’s careers are different from men’s because they are more closely aligned with and sometimes a consequence of women’s caring roles within the home (Conley and Jenkins, 2011, p. 492).

Individual interviews conducted by Moreau and colleagues (2007) suggested that “career breaks after childbirth and/or returning part time” are key factors in women’s under-representation in educational leadership positions (p. 242). In the UK, statutory maternity leave is 52 weeks while paternity leave stands at just 2 weeks. Although the option of shared parental leave was introduced in 2015, the statutory rights that men and women have to occupational leave following the birth of a child in the UK are highly inequitable, and this sends the message that the care of young children is the responsibility of the mother (Coleman, 2011, p. 111). According to the latest school workforce data in England, there are significantly more women teachers working part-time in secondary schools than male teachers (DfE, 2015a). This is echoed in the UK labour market as a whole in which 41% of women and only 12% of men were employed on a part-time basis between August and October 2014 (McGuinness and Watson, 2015, p.5).

Analysing the results of a large scale survey of NASUWT teachers' union members holding senior posts and schools that had recently appointed senior leaders, McNamara and colleagues (2010) found that female respondents rated caring and family responsibilities to be the second greatest barrier to leadership aspirations for women (p. 14). They report that "after returning from maternity breaks, nearly 30% returned part-time and 10% to supply posts" (*ibid.* p. 13). Researchers have found that teachers in part-time roles are less interested in promotion than their full-time colleagues (Wilson et al., 2006, p. 245). This suggests that child-rearing and the necessity to work part-time that some women teachers experience can have a negative influence on their leadership aspirations.

Some writers (see, for example, Evetts, 1994; Thornton and Bricheno, 2009; McLay, 2008) observe that as a consequence of maternity leave and part-time working following child birth, women are generally older than their male counterparts when applying for secondary headship, and this presents another challenge when aspiring towards secondary school leadership. In her study of the career pathways of men and women headteachers in UK independent coeducational schools, McLay (2008) found that career breaks to have children disadvantage women by giving them a "shorter 'window of opportunity' in which to apply for headship" (p. 359). Her work seems to suggest that the challenges that are posed by career breaks and part-time working that some women experience on the road to headship are exacerbated by age.

Previous research findings have suggested that women are more geographically constrained than men and this can limit opportunities for career development and advancement. McNamara and colleagues (2010) for instance found that women were more likely than men to identify childcare responsibilities as limiting their ability to relocate to pursue career advancement. Likewise, Moreau et al. (2007) found "women teachers' professional and geographical mobility depended on that of their partners. As a consequence, many women had experienced leaving a job at an inappropriate time career-wise and having to apply for jobs with strict geographical boundaries" (p. 242). This theme of geographical restriction is

potentially linked to findings within the field which suggest that men are more likely than women to have careers which take on greater importance within family life (McNamara et al., 2010; Coleman, 2002).

Comparing the survey responses of men and women headteachers, Coleman (2002) found that women heads are more likely to be divorced or separated and living alone, and less likely to be married and have children than their male counterparts (p. 50 – 51). Interestingly, “of the headteachers who were mothers, most had used child-minders. In contrast, most of the men had relied on their wives” for childcare and hence their careers were often perceived as secondary to those of their husbands (*ibid.* p. 55). Bradbury and Gunter (2006) interviewed twenty women who were both mothers and primary headteachers in schools in the North Midlands of England. They found that both motherhood and their professional lives had a great deal of meaning for them, and that the interplay between these two identities was integral (*ibid.* p. 502). Yet when this interplay became unbalanced and therefore one area of life had to take priority, individuals experienced guilt, conflicting expectations and dialogic tensions; the authors observe that “as a mother there is an expectation that your place is with your child and you will be seen as a ‘bad’ mother if you fail in this; but as a headteacher there is an expectation that you will put the needs of the school first, and you will be seen as a failure if you do not do this” (*ibid.* p. 500). Similarly, in their survey of female headteachers in Spanish pre-primary and primary schools, Coronel et al. (2010) found role conflict to be “the biggest barrier on the road to advancing headship” (p. 230). Yet, unlike Bradbury and Gunter’s (2006) interviewees, many of their respondents were unwilling to compromise their home lives in the pursuit of promotion. The authors argue that the possibility of role conflict helps to explain why women “consider becoming a head later in life, once their family has been restructured and their children have grown older” (*ibid.* p. 232).

In her study of the factors that impact on Australian women teachers’ leadership aspirations, Lacey (2004) found evidence of the existence of ‘gender-blind’ and ‘smart macho’ cultures within schools in which women teachers experience “a lack of real access to flexible work options, such as part time work for people in

leadership positions” and “discrimination if they cannot work at a sufficiently economically efficient and competitive pace” (p. 15). Examples of some women’s attempts to make up for time away from work for family commitments and therefore combat the challenges posed by ‘gender-blind’ and ‘smart macho’ work environments can be found throughout the literature. The female headteachers in Hall’s (1996) study for instance reported working “exceptionally hard to compensate for any time they needed to take away from work, as a result of having children” (p. 185). Likewise, Smithson and Stokoe (2005) report incidences of women working ‘like men’ and taking limited time off after having a child in order to “be accepted as a core member of the organisation (rather than being relegated to the ‘mommy track’), and to minimise charges of a backlash” (p. 164). The authors characterise this approach as ‘macho maternity’. Overall, the evidence presented in this section appears to suggest that having a child has the potential to constrain women’s career trajectories and choices in numerous ways. This body of research therefore seems to suggest that, as Shakeshaft (2006) observes, “many women make career decisions around issues of family, while many men make family decisions around issues of career” (p. 508).

Work – family arrangements

In view of the well-documented constraints and challenges explored in the previous section, McLay (2008) argues that women teachers are more likely than men to have to implement a ‘life’ strategy, “that is the conscious decision of whether to have children with the resulting responsibilities for childcare” (p. 363). Evetts’ (1994) career history interviews with twenty male and female secondary headteachers in the Midlands of England revealed five career strategies for managing career and family life. These can be found in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Evetts' *career strategies*

Single Career

The one – person career strategy which involves one person only.

The two – person career strategy in which one partner advances their career while the other does not pursue advancement.

Dual Career

The postponement strategy in which one partner postpones their career development until the other has attained promotion.

The modification strategy in which one partner adjusts their career to fit in with the career plans and advancements of the other partner.

The balancing strategy in which both partners pursue career advancement simultaneously.

Source: Evetts, 1994, p. 53.

This typology of career strategies was drawn on in Coleman's major study of six hundred and seventy men and women secondary headteachers in 2002. The author found evidence of each of Evetts' career types in her data. She also found evidence to suggest that the age of women headteachers exerts an influence over the type of career model and strategy they adopt to balance work and family responsibilities. This is a dimension missing from Evetts' typology, and was used by Coleman to delineate three career models that women headteachers with children utilise. The three models outlined within Coleman's work are traditional/subjective, mixed mode and changing/balanced. These can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: *Three female career models*

	Traditional/ Subjective	Mixed Mode	Changing
Who?	Wives of headteachers	Older women headteachers	Younger women headteachers and their partners
Children?	Yes	Yes	Less than half with children
Career break?	Yes	Yes	Minimal maternity leave
Main childcare responsibility?	Wife	Woman has responsibility, uses childminder	More likely to share responsibility
Main career strategy?	Single or subjective career or accommodated career	Postponed, moderated or balanced	'Male' model or balanced
Domestic responsibility?	Mainly with wives	More often with women, some sharing	More evidence of sharing
Moving to follow husband?	Yes, common	Yes, fairly common	Almost equal with husband

Source: Coleman, 2002, p. 77

Within her typology of women's career strategies, Coleman (2002) argues that younger women headteachers are more likely to adopt a 'male' model of career than their older colleagues. This is a career strategy in which "work takes precedence" over family life (*ibid.* p. 74). It is those who opt for a 'male' career strategy, Coleman argues, that are more likely to be childfree (*ibid.* p. 74). The term 'childfree' as opposed to 'childless' has been adopted throughout this thesis. The rationale for this word choice focuses on the idea that the term 'childless' suggests the "loss and absence of something deemed important", while 'childfree' implies a conscious, deliberate choice (Wood and Newton, 2006, p. 339). Statistical data collected by the Office for National Statistics (2013) shows that increased numbers of women are choosing not to have children. In a series of in-depth interviews with female academic managers working in a UK university, Priola (2007) found that the majority of the women she interviewed did

not have children and that they believed “they could not do their job while having a family” (p. 33). Priola’s interviewees appeared to perceive educational leadership and motherhood to be incompatible. They had therefore prioritised their careers (*ibid.* p. 34). Likewise, in their interview study on Australian middle managers in a variety of occupational sectors, Wood and Newton (2006) found that the choice to have children or not was “contextually generated” and that there was a “recognition that the culture of long working hours does not support appropriate parenting” (p. 355). It seems, as Coleman (2011) remarks, “it is no coincidence that many women who are successful as managers and leaders are childfree. For a woman, having both children and a demanding leadership role involves some difficult and constrained choices forcing her to prioritize one or the other” (p. 2).

Coleman’s (2002) female career models found in Table 1 suggest that older women headteachers are likely to take on the bulk of childcare responsibility, while younger female senior leaders will adopt a ‘changing’ model of career in which they are likely to share childcare responsibility with their partner. This typology however fails to account for households in which the father is the primary caregiver. Kramer et al. (2013) observe that stay-at-home father households “are the least studied form of household income structure” (p. 1652). This is despite this type of family arrangement “increasing in prevalence and visibility” (Dunn et al., 2013, p. 3). Increasing numbers of stay-at-home father households may mark a subtle shift in family arrangements from 2002, the year in which Coleman’s study was published, to the present day. It is interesting to note that in Coleman’s study of four hundred and sixty nine female headteachers in England in 2001 only three respondents listed “‘house husband’ in the list of occupations of partners” (p. 79). Via an online survey, Dunn and colleagues (2013) found the decision-making process around family arrangements, caregiving and paid work to be complex. The authors’ analysis showed that economic reasons were the primary determinant of work – family arrangements. This finding is in keeping with Exchange Theory which dictates that fathers are more likely to be primary caregivers when their partners have greater earning potential and career prospects (Kramer et al., 2013, p. 1659). The authors also found that

the majority of their female sample reported being more able to succeed at work as a result of their partner's role as primary caregiver. Interestingly, the study also highlighted the disadvantages of this work-family arrangement including the disappointment that some women experienced as a result of missing key milestones in their children's lives (*ibid.* p. 12), the stress that some women experienced as a consequence of being the sole earner (*ibid.* p. 17) and the workplace and community based stigma they experienced as a result of their work-family arrangements (*ibid.* p. 13).

Preference Theory

Preference Theory, proposed by Catherine Hakim, states that women have a 'genuine choice' to make between employment and family life in "prosperous modern societies" (Hakim, 2006, p. 286). Arguing that the ability to choose between paid employment and 'family work' is largely unavailable to men (Hakim, 2000, p. 1), Hakim maintains that "whatever their ambitions and life plans, women can now choose occupations far more freely than in the past" (Hakim, 2006, p. 291). Increased opportunities and choices for women in the 21st century are argued to be due to social and labour market changes including the increased availability of reliable contraception, the introduction of equal opportunities legislation and increased jobs for secondary earners (Hakim, 2000, p. 3). Preference Theory is underpinned by the individual's ability to choose as well as the notions of diversity and heterogeneity. Hakim argues that women are a heterogeneous group who prioritise differently, adopt different stances and make different decisions regarding employment and family life. In light of these observations, Hakim proposes three different types of work-lifestyle preference: home-centred, adaptive and work-centred. This classification is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Women's work-lifestyle preferences

Home-Centred	Adaptive	Work-Centred
20% of women Varies 10% - 30%	60% of women Varies 40% - 80%	20% of women Varies 10% - 30%
Children and family are the main priorities throughout life.	This group is the most diverse and includes women who want to combine work and family, plus drifters and unplanned careers	Childfree women are concentrated here. Main priority in life is employment or equivalent activities such as politics, sport, art, etc.
Prefer not to work.	Want to work, but not totally committed to work career.	Committed to work or equivalent activities.
Qualifications obtained for intellectual dowry.	Qualifications obtained with the intention of working.	Large investment in qualifications for employment or other activities.

Source: Hakim, 2000, p. 158

'Home-centred women' are believed to prefer the private realm of the home and therefore prioritise their family and other life commitments over work. Comprising of approximately 20% of women, this group is said to "accept the sexual division of labour in the home" (Hakim, 2000, p. 159). 'Work-centred women' on the other hand are argued to prioritise their public lives, careers or "some activity other than motherhood and family life" (*ibid.* p. 164). Comprising of approximately 20% of women, they adopt what could be described as a 'male' model of career, and are more likely than any other group to be childfree (*ibid.* p. 164). 'Adaptive women' are said to lie somewhere in between the extremes of 'home-centred' and 'work-centred' women. This group includes those who prefer to combine paid work and family life without prioritising either sphere (*ibid.* p. 165). Hakim (2000) argues that it is often yet erroneously believed that this group of women are representative of all women. In reality, she argues, these women represent approximately 60% of the female population residing in 'prosperous societies' (p. 165).

It is clear that Preference Theory highlights the importance of choice and individualisation. In privileging agency and the freedom to choose, Hakim (2006) maintains that constraints and “social structural factors are of declining importance” (p. 286). Via the lens of her theory, Hakim argues that “men will continue to outnumber women in the top jobs, simply because they try much harder to get them” (*ibid.* p. 290). Furthermore, she maintains that heterogeneity “is the source not only of polarisation in women’s labour market behaviour but also of the unequal labour market outcomes between women and men” (McRae, 2003, p. 319). Having explored Hakim’s Preference Theory, I will now move on to discuss its potential criticisms.

Critique and the consideration of constraint

Many writers have challenged Hakim’s Preference Theory on the grounds that it does not place enough emphasis on the social structures and constraints that frame and shape women’s lives. Broadbridge (2010), for example, found the career narratives of women executives and directors working in the UK retail sector “were infused with notions of choice but these choices are often constrained and are related to traditional and stereotypical views of gender roles and to outdated company cultures and attitudes” (p. 256). She concludes that Hakim’s argument that women have ‘genuine choices’ between employment and family life in view of such restriction is unconvincing. McRae (2003) comes to a similar conclusion, and posits that a serious weakness of Preference Theory is the absence of any consideration of the constraints that women face in the labour market. She argues “that a complete explanation of women’s labour market choices after childbirth, and of the outcomes of those choices, depends as much on understanding the constraints that differentially affect women as it does on understanding their personal preferences” (p. 318). Indeed, the theory of intersectionality posits that women’s experiences in the labour market will be dependent on the various and interrelated strands of their social identity including their age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Carbado et al., 2013). This suggests that women’s professional lives are not a result of their personal preferences alone, but rather contingent on a multitude of complex and

interrelated factors. Intersectionality is explored in more detail later on in this chapter.

Arguably, in failing to take into account the numerous challenges and restrictions that women face both in the labour market and society at large, Hakim effectively blames women for their under-representation in leadership positions. This is an argument advanced by Broadbridge (2010) who observes:

Hakim claims that preference theory predicts that men retain their dominance in the labour market because only a minority of women are prepared to prioritise their jobs in the same way as men. Thus, she places the onus on women rather than organisations and societal attitudes for women's minority status in the labour market (p. 248).

Another potential weakness of Preference Theory is that her classification of women's preferences perhaps takes something away from the individuality and uniqueness of women's life experiences and the choices they face. Characterising women as 'adaptive' for example is to group individuals together and suggest they have similar or comparable lives and careers. The readers' attention therefore is directed towards the group as opposed to individuals' lived experiences. These reservations are shared by Broadbridge (2010) who argues that the categories used to 'explain' women's heterogeneity may not reflect their experiences (p. 257). Kumra (2010) also expresses similar reservations. In her study focusing on Hakim's 'work-centred women' in an international consulting firm, she found the characteristics Hakim aligns with 'work-centred' women to be too simplistic. Kumra (2010) believes these characteristics to be inadequate in accounting for the family commitments, careers and preferences of all of those who can be categorised as 'work-centred'. I share the reservations outlined above, and therefore have rejected Hakim's Preference Theory as a lens through which to view my own research. I have chosen instead to adopt a set of theoretical lenses which take into account the enabling *and* constraining influences shaping women's career decisions as well as the heterogeneity that exists between individuals. These are explored both later on in this chapter, and in the findings and discussion sections of this thesis.

Stereotyping, generalising and bias

Having discussed the constraints that family responsibility can pose to women aspirants, the next section of this chapter addresses the issues of stereotyping, essentialism and bias in the workplace. Some of the literature concerned with women's under-representation in educational leadership suggests that the essentialisation of women and men can constrain some of the women who aspire towards and apply for secondary headship (see, for example, Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010; McLay, 2008; Moorosi, 2010). As Coleman (2002) explains "stereotypes cause barriers to career progress and centre round the unthinking belief that there is a 'natural order' – male leadership and female subordination" (p. 79). It is therefore to literature concerned with stereotyping, essentialising and bias that this chapter now turns.

'Think male – think manager'

Leadership and the public exercise of power is traditionally and stereotypically associated with men (Billing and Alvesson, 2000; Ford, 2006; Thornton and Bricheno, 2009; Coleman, 2003). Schein (2007) argues that the "think male – think manager attitude" endures within our 21st century society, and that there is a deeply held societal belief that leadership positions are "for men only", or "only men are really qualified" to fulfil them (p. 12). The 'masculine' stereotype of the educational leader is typically aligned with what gender theorists call 'hegemonic masculinity' i.e. the image of the middle class, white, heterosexual male (Chard, 2013, p. 171). Connell (1995) states "hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p. 77). Within this definition, 'hegemonic masculinity' can be seen as "a pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity)" performed with the intention of preserving the dominance of a socially powerful group of men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). It is this stereotype of 'hegemonic masculinity', Coleman (2007) argues, that "consciously and unconsciously influences our expectations of what a leader 'should be'", and therefore shapes both what we expect from a leader and the behaviours of those

who occupy educational leadership positions (p. 383). While considering the stereotypical alignment between hegemonic masculinity and the educational leader, it is interesting to question the extent to which deputy headship is generally associated with masculinity. Scholars suggest that within the secondary school context it is the headteacher who is the leader whereas those holding deputy headteacher posts have more of a managerial function (Harris et al., 2003, p. 2). In the absence of literature concerned with the gendered perceptions of those holding deputy headteacher posts, it seems interesting to consider how these senior yet more managerial roles are perceived and whether they are traditionally and stereotypically associated with masculinity as well.

Headteacher recruitment and reproducing the status quo

Coleman (2002, p. 47) identifies five types of discrimination that women experience during the headteacher recruitment process:

- *Overt discrimination*: “legal discrimination prior to the legislation of the 1970s” (Coleman, 2002, p. 39).
- *Direct discrimination*: “when someone is treated less favourably than others” (Coleman, 2002, p. 41).
- *Sexual harassment*: unwelcome sexual behavior such as being “groped by an interviewer over lunch” (Coleman, 2002, p. 47).
- *Indirect discrimination*: “when a non-essential requirement for a job has the effect of excluding one gender or ethnic group” (Coleman, 2002, p. 43).
- *Prevailing social values*: the ongoing and unquestioned values of our society (Coleman, 2002, p. 44).

Coleman’s typology appears to echo the types of discrimination reported by other scholars concerned with the under-representation of women in secondary headship. For example, a number of studies have considered the effects that stereotypical attitudes towards women by selection and interview panels can have on their advancement towards secondary headship (Shakeshaft, 2006). In her survey of men and women secondary headteachers in Birmingham (UK) Fuller (2009) found that “64.7 per cent of women were aware of sexist attitudes

in connection with job applications or promotions compared to 21.9 per cent of men” (p. 27). This trend is echoed in the findings of a large scale survey of NASUWT members conducted by McNamara and colleagues (2010). The researchers found that six times as many women as men working in the secondary sector reported sex discrimination and nearly half of all respondents believed that men were viewed more favourably than women during the headteacher selection process (p. 14 - 15). This is not unique to the UK; a Ugandan survey of women teachers conducted by Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) found that some women feared sexist discrimination when applying for headship posts due to the male dominated nature of interview panels. The predominance of men involved in headteacher recruitment is a common theme within the literature (see, for example, see Kagoda, 2015; Coleman, 2002) and suggests, as Moorosi (2010) observes, that this has the potential to ‘sabotage’ women as their “suitability and acceptability are likely to be assessed according to male attributes” (p. 549). In addition to the stereotypical assumptions of potential interviewers or ‘gatekeepers’, the attitudes of senior governors have also received critical attention. It has been suggested that governors often bring with them stereotypical attitudes from other industries that align leadership with a particular form of masculinity (Coleman, 2007). It is argued that some governors believe men are needed for “disciplining boys and ‘balancing’ the predominance of women in schools” (Thornton and Bricheno, 2009, p. 170).

It has been argued that the numerical dominance of men in leadership positions and therefore interview panels creates a situation in which men are likely to recruit new headteachers who resemble themselves in “attitude, philosophy, actions and appearance” (Oplatka and Tamir, 2009, p. 219). This process of ‘recruiting in one’s own image’ (Coleman, 2012) potentially discriminates against women who are unlikely to bear a resemblance to existing male heads. The findings of a study concerned with headteacher selection in Victoria and South Australia conducted by Blackmore et al. (2006) suggest that “many research participants believed that women, in general, still face an element of disadvantage as leadership positions continue to be perceived, by conservative panels, as belonging to men” (p. 312). The authors report that recruitment

processes for headship promotes a “homosocial reproduction of the normalised principal identity” (*ibid.* p. 315). A desire for safety and certainty on the part of recruiters is argued to result in “particular kinds of people being successful” (*ibid.* p. 297). Similarly, Gronn and Lacey (2010) argue that in an educational climate of managerialism and accountability schools tend to ‘play safe’ when recruiting senior leaders. Drawing on data collected from two studies, the authors found that the most frequently cited ‘blocker’ to career aspirations was “school – based appointments and selection” (*ibid.* p. 286). The authors maintain that, despite the meritocratic rhetoric surrounding the recruitment process, selectors will focus on the ‘fit’ of aspirants and therefore the selection process comes to resemble a type of “cloning” (*ibid.* p. 296).

Confidence and self-perceptions

In addition to women’s greater responsibility within the family home and the presence of stereotypical attitudes, scholars have also suggested that women are likely to feel less confident than men when contemplating their professional futures (see, for example, Lacey, 2004; Muñoz et al., 2014; Cubillo and Brown, 2003). A number of gender differences in career confidence have been identified by researchers working in this area. Several studies, for instance, have found that women are less likely to plan careers which culminate in headship (Coleman, 2007; Wilson et al., 2006). It is possible that this finding reveals a lack of willingness on the part of some women to open themselves up to the possibility of failure. Furthermore, other scholars have reported that women are more likely than men to delay seeking promotion until they feel they are able to fulfil all of the criteria for a post (Coleman, 2002, p. 30). This potentially exposes an element of perfectionism. Lastly, some research has found that women are more likely to be promoted in the same school or local authority than men (McNamara et al., 2010, p. 29). It is possible that this finding reveals a lack of confidence to look outside of what is known for promotion.

Some researchers suggest that men feel more confident than women in their abilities to both pursue promotion and fulfil a leadership role (Coleman, 2001; Thornton and Bricheno, 2009; Singh et al., 2006). Indeed, 43% of women

surveyed by Coleman (2002) “harboured doubts about their ability to obtain headship” (p. 32). Qualitative interviews conducted by Muñoz and colleagues (2014) focused on the career paths and professional aspirations of ten superintendents in Texas. Their results indicated that participants had experienced a lack of career confidence as a result of having internalized traditional and stereotypical expectations of women. They had therefore been unwilling to put themselves forward for promoted posts. The authors conclude that “women themselves tend to give up and remove themselves from the ‘race to the top’ rather than fight for the position due to their own stereotypical beliefs” (Muñoz et al., 2014, p. 779). Likewise, in their Zimbabwean study of nine school headteachers, Chabaya et al. (2009) found that “myths, stereotypes and prejudices related to the abilities and attitudes of women” had contributed to their lack of confidence and self-esteem when it came to taking on the challenge of leadership (p. 240). One of their interviewees remarked “women are not courageous enough to accept big roles” (*ibid.* p. 241).

Lacey (2004) argues that some women aspirants to headship find the school leadership selection process to be “traumatic because of an inherent fear of rejection, fear of the unknown and a lack of confidence” (p. 9). She cites evidence to suggest that older women are more likely than younger women to “view the application process as a judgement of them personally” (*ibid.* p. 9). Similar vulnerabilities and doubts can be found in the diary entries of twenty one headship aspirants that were collected by Gronn and Lacey (2004). There is some empirical evidence to suggest that lack of confidence may be exacerbated by line managers who feel unable to boost confidence levels. Rhodes and Brundrett (2005), for example, examined the perceptions of twelve primary headteachers and twelve middle leaders in the Midlands of England. They found that while “many of the heads were aware of the need to build staff confidence, they were not sure how this could be done effectively and equitably with a view to increase possibilities for succession” (p. 17).

The perceptions that we have of ourselves have been shown to influence the levels of confidence that we experience. Clance and Imes (1978) suggest that

some women experience 'the imposter phenomenon' or "an internal experience of intellectual phoniness" (p. 241). Following psychotherapy sessions with one hundred and fifty successful women, the authors found that their respondents "did not experience an internal sense of success" (*ibid.* p. 241) and reported a "generalised anxiety, lack of self-confidence, depression, and frustration related to inability to meet self-imposed standards of achievement" (*ibid.* p.242). The women believed that others held an inflated impression of their abilities, and they therefore lived in fear that they would eventually be exposed as both ineffectual and deceitful (Jarrett, 2010, p. 380). The women in Clance and Imes' (1978) original sample were found to be more likely than their male counterparts to attribute their success to external factors, luck or effort as opposed to their own intelligence and abilities (p. 242). The importance of women's self-perceptions is also highlighted by Smith (2011a). Taking a life history approach to research, she conducted open-ended interviews with forty female secondary school teachers. She invited newly qualified, mid and late-career teachers as well as headteachers in southern and central England to speak about the factors framing their decisions about their professional futures (p. 10). Taking an inductive approach to analysis inspired by grounded theory, a typology of female teachers' career approaches focusing on how women's "career decisions are linked with self-perceptions about personal agency" was posited (p. 22). One group perceived their career paths as being externally defined, while the other group perceived their careers to be self-defined. Smith (2011a) concludes that "women's self-perceptions regarding their own agency, and the ways in which they choose to exert it, are key influences in career decision-making" (p. 22). This section has explored the constraints that self-perceptions and a lack of confidence can pose for women who aspire towards secondary headship. The next part of this chapter addresses the educational landscape in England and the ways in which the secondary headteacher role can be viewed.

The educational landscape and impressions of the 'top job'

Perceptions of the educational climate in England and beliefs about the secondary headteacher role are believed to be deterring some potential aspirants from aspiring towards and applying for secondary headship (NCSL, 2007). Bush

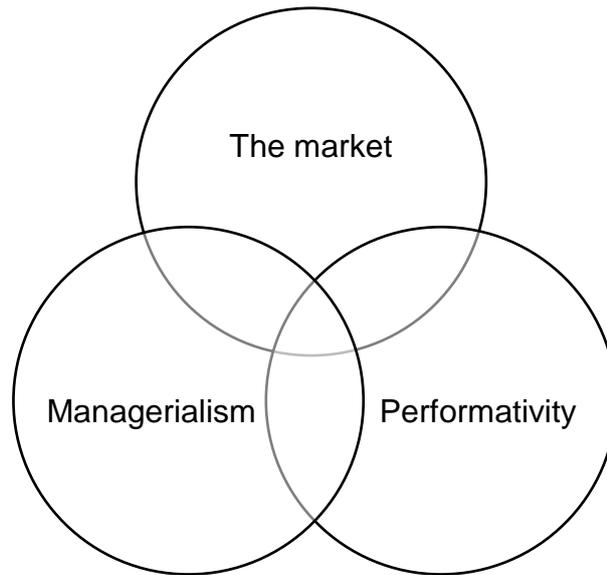
(2015) remarks that in the light of evidence relating to both factors “it is perhaps unsurprising that headship is unattractive” (p. 855). With this observation in mind, it is to literature concerned with performativity in the English school system as well as women’s perceptions of the headteacher role that this chapter now turns.

The educational landscape

Teachers and leaders do not work in a cultural and social vacuum; their behaviours, perceptions and professional aspirations are shaped by the education system in which they work. Ball (2013) argues that observers of the education system in England have witnessed “the increasing colonisation of educational policy by economic policy imperatives” (p. 46). The move towards the principles of neo-liberalism and its associated doctrines of efficiency, competition and marketisation has resulted in a stream of reforms in educational policy (Earley, 2013). Ball (2013) explores what he terms ‘policy technologies’ (p. 48). These are mechanisms of educational reform and involve “the calculated deployment of techniques and artefacts to organise human forces and capabilities into functioning networks of power” (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

Ball classifies the market, managerialism and performativity as ‘policy technologies’ (see Figure 5). These are argued to be interlinked and working together to bring public sector organisations in line “with the methods, culture and ethical system of the private sector” (Ball, 2003, p. 216). These mechanisms of reform are argued to be changing or re-shaping the practices, social relationships and identities of individual teachers and leaders (Ball, 2013, p. 49). All three technologies are said to create an educational climate that leaves little or no space for “an autonomous or collective ethical self” (Ball, 2003, p. 226). What follows is a description of each policy technology in turn. It is anticipated that these mechanisms of reform have the capacity to illuminate the relationship between the lived experiences of the individual deputy headteacher and the educational culture in which they are situated.

Figure 5: *Ball's policy technologies*



The market

Marketisation hinges on the concepts of choice, competition and diversity. The Education Reform Act (1988) drew closely on neo-liberal thought to advocate the creation of 'quasi-markets' and entrepreneurialism in education (Higham and Earley, 2013). Neo-liberalism, according to Ball (2012), "is one of those terms that is used so widely and so loosely that it is in danger of becoming meaningless" (p. 3). Yet it is used here to refer to the "set of practices that are organised around a certain imagination of the 'market'" (Shamir, 2008 cited in Ball, 2012, p. 3). The rise of neo-liberal thinking in education prompted moves to increase parental choice and school diversity. Whitty (2008) observes that the Conservative government of the 1980s and 1990s "acted to increase the power of the 'consumer' and reduce that of the 'producers'" (p. 166). This was achieved via 'open enrolment', by linking a school's funding to the number of students on roll as well as the introduction of City Technology Colleges and Grant Maintained Schools (Stevenson and Wood, 2013, p. 48). It was anticipated that greater parental choice as well as an increased variety of schools to choose from would mean that high-achieving schools would be popular parental choices and hence thrive within the educational 'marketplace'. Underperforming schools, on the other hand, would be forced to improve in order to attract 'consumers' and avoid closure. Market forces in education and therefore the diversity of educational

provision available to parental 'consumers' has intensified since The Education Reform Act (Stevenson and Wood, 2013). For instance, the introduction and growing presence of academy schools (defined as "publicly-funded independent schools" (Academies Commission, 2013, p. 16)) and free schools (defined as schools that are "funded by the government but aren't run by the local council" (DfE, 2016a)) in England increased parental choice further.

'Market information', i.e. schools' performances in tests and examinations, has been "published from 1992 onwards in the form of league tables" (Ball, 2008, p. 186). Readily available performance data works to both assist parents in making informed school choices and to foster a greater degree of competition between schools. Ball (2013) argues that marketisation in education "rests on the introduction of the dynamics of competition into public sector systems, with the effect of breaking them down into separate 'business' units, that is, competition between providers – schools, colleges and universities – to recruit students in order to maximise their 'income'" (p. 52). Seeking to remain competitive, schools in the current educational landscape place a great deal of emphasis on their performance in national tests and examinations. Stevenson and Wood (2013) argue that "the intensification of market forces is intended to place an increased pressure on teachers to improve test scores and for teachers to make this the central focus of their work" (p. 50). Market forces in education, therefore, have the capacity to shape and influence the working lives of the women deputy headteachers who are the focus of this study.

Managerialism

Ball (2013) argues that New Public Management (NPM) has been instrumental in reforming public sector organisations (p. 55). Drawing heavily on the thinking underpinning the private sector, this is a form of management which is "driven by an emphasis on target-setting, performance review, and the use of incentives and sanctions to reward appropriate behaviours and punish inappropriate behaviour or what is deemed poor performance" (Stevenson and Wood, 2013, p. 50). In short, managerialism is concerned with quality, performance and control. According to Ball (2013), the manager or leader "is the cultural hero of the new

public service paradigm” (p. 55). He or she is instrumental in creating an organisational culture in which workers feel both accountable and committed (*ibid.* p. 55). Conley and Jenkins (2011) note that managerialism places schools and individual teachers under considerable pressure to perform and increase attainment (p. 495). Like marketisation, the policy technology of managerialism has the capacity to shape teachers’ professional experiences. The data collected as part of this study has the potential to illuminate the ways in which individual deputies have responded to, and possibly enacted, this style of management.

Performativity

Ball (2013) defines performativity as “a culture or a system of ‘terror’. It is a regime of accountability that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change” (p. 57). Ball’s notion of ‘performativity’ is interlaced with the work of Lyotard (1984) who defined the term as the “optimisation of the global relationship between input and output” (p. 11). In its concern for efficiency, outcomes and continual improvement, a ‘performative’ culture requires individuals and their practice to be quantifiable and “accountable against the same standards” (Perryman, 2009, p. 618). Ball (2010) argues that a performative educational culture “invites and incites us to make ourselves more effective” as teachers and leaders (p. 125). As well as being concerned with efficiency, a performative culture is performance-oriented. It offers both symbolic and tangible rewards and sanctions depending on individual activity and appearance (Ball, 2003, p. 216).

A performative educational culture is argued to be data rich, numbers-driven and results-oriented. It insists on quantitative evidence of the accountability and, therefore, the standardisation of the work of teachers, leaders and their schools (Perryman, 2009, p. 618). This is a culture that is concerned with ‘measurable outcomes’ and depends on the regular generation, presentation and analysis of data. Performativity relies not only on data, but also on inspection regimes and the ability of the public to access school inspection reports (Ball, 2008). The teacher or leader operating in a performative educational culture is said to be constantly observed, policed and judged in the name of accountability. Ball

argues that in the current educational climate teachers and leaders experience “being constantly judged in different ways, by different means, according to different criteria, through different agents and agencies” (2013, p. 58).

In England, school inspections are carried out by The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) which was introduced via the Education (Schools) Act of 1992. The continual judgement to which Ball refers can be seen in the presence of Ofsted inspections and those of other external agencies, as well as senior leaders’ ‘book trawls’, ‘learning walks’ and observations. For Perryman (2009), being an educator in a performative culture is the modern equivalent of being in Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, “or rather the panoptic metaphor made real” (p.617). Within the Panopticon of the English school system, the ‘audience’ of all that is done is the external observer: the parent, the inspector and the central government official. He or she has the power to judge and, in doing so, defines the actions and worth of those she or he observes. Interestingly, Courtney (2014) has argued that education in England is entering a post-panoptic regime which, in its quest for continual visibility, “is designed to wrong-foot school leaders, disrupt the fabrications they have constructed to withstand the inspectors’ gaze, and make more visible the artifice of the performances that constitute their identities” (p. 2).

Perryman (2006) argues that Ofsted, and particularly the label of ‘special measures’, forms “an important part of the disciplinary regime in education” (p. 147). She argues that Ofsted labels have come to define not only the effectiveness but the *worth* of a school, its staff, pupils and local community. To be judged to be in ‘special measures’ means further inspections, increased surveillance and governmental intervention as well as the threat of school closure. There becomes therefore a necessity, Perryman (2006) argues, for schools to normalise themselves against Ofsted’s “predetermined criteria” of performance in order to become ‘successful’ (p. 152).

Work intensification is said to be a defining feature of the current, performative educational landscape (Earley, 2013). Gronn (2003, p. 147) terms the activities

required by educators working in such climates to be 'greedy work practices'. He argues that work becomes 'greedy' when an individual becomes "responsible for an amount and quality of work output, and a depth of emotional and cognitive commitment and work engagement that might previously have been demanded of more than one person" (p. 150). The Department for Education's *Teachers' Workload Diary Survey* (2014) revealed that deputy headteachers reported working 19.1 hours a week 'out of hours' (i.e. before 8am, after 6pm and on weekends) while headteachers worked 21.5 (p.13). Through the lens of Ball's work, it can be argued that the 'out of hours' working required of senior leaders is a result of all tasks being presented as urgent and necessary in a performative culture (Ball, 2001, p. 212). Prioritising roles and responsibilities therefore becomes difficult, the workload pressures intensify and the work required of any one individual becomes harder to perform (Ball, 2003; Gronn, 2003). Indeed, in an Irish life history study, Cunneen and Harford (2016) found that one of the key obstacles that twelve women headteachers had encountered on the pathway to headship was a neoliberal policy agenda. The authors report that each of their participants:

Commented at length about the impact of a growing culture of performativity and accountability on their work practices and professional identity. Each also observed how such an agenda conflicted with their rationale for becoming a school principal, which had been closely informed by a social justice agenda (*ibid.* p. 163-164).

Gronn and Rawlings-Sanaei (2003) argue that individuals refuse to pursue leadership opportunities when they work within a policy climate which fosters role expansion, work intensification and increased expectations. The authors call this 'leadership disengagement' and suggest that the performative educational culture in which teachers work can deter potential aspirants from headship. School inspection, another prominent feature of the English educational landscape, has also been argued to be dissuading potential headteachers from pursuing promotion. MacBeath and colleagues (2009), for instance, found that more than half of the Scottish headteachers they interviewed described their experiences of inspection as 'adversarial', 'undermining' or 'stigmatising' (p. 33).

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that current inspection arrangements may be deterring deputies from applying for headships. A survey of deputy and assistant headteachers and vice principals conducted by The National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) in 2016 found that only 36 per cent of respondents aspired towards headship (p. 6). When respondents were asked what would make them feel more confident about pursuing 'the top job', 58 per cent of deputies and vice principals said "no inspection in their first year" (*ibid.* p. 16). The authors concluded that England's "punitive accountability framework may be the key factor deterring deputies from headship. This needs to be addressed by Ofsted and employers if we are to encourage high performing professionals into headship" (*ibid.* p. 3). These findings are not gender specific, and suggest a potential reason why some male as well as female deputy headteachers reject headship. What the findings of these studies do not account for, however, is why women are less likely to become headteachers. This study aims to shed some light on this issue.

Perceptions of the headteacher role

The literature suggests that within a performative educational culture, secondary headship is often perceived to be a stressful, isolating and precarious role requiring its incumbents to work long hours and shoulder the burdens of accountability, performativity and bureaucracy (Barty et al., 2005; Gronn, 2003; Bush, 2015; Earley, 2013). In their study of Israeli women deputy headteachers, Oplatka and Tamir (2009), for instance, found that the headteacher role, with its emphasis on accountability, administrative processes and 'masculine' managerialism, was perceived to be stressful and removed from the "interesting, challenging and self-fulfilling" role of the deputy headteacher who still has a lot to do with the progress and wellbeing of pupils (p. 232). Ingrained within the findings of this study is an image of headship that is externally controlled, highly stressful and isolating. Similar findings are reported by Smith (2011b). In her life history study of 40 female secondary school teachers, Smith found that 28 of the 30 participants who were not headteachers at the time of interview perceived headship negatively and therefore did not aspire towards headship (*ibid.* p.517).

Her participants perceived the headteacher role to be “incompatible with their pupil-centred values, working preferences and personal lives” (p. 526).

Secondary headship requires individuals to move away from the relatively private domain of the classroom to the wider, more public sphere of school leadership. Research suggests that some potential aspirants perceive this as an unattractive element of the headteacher role. In their study of sixteen women administrators in the US, Loder and Spillane (2005) found that the shift from teaching to leadership was difficult for those who had enjoyed working in the classroom and had experienced positive relationships with both their pupils (p. 270) and colleagues (p. 271). The authors concluded that the roles of teacher and leader were “strikingly different in terms of work domains, responsibilities and expectations” and that this discontinuity between roles could act to deter potential women aspirants (*ibid.* p. 275).

Research suggests that negative impressions of headship, especially among women, can emerge as early as the teacher training years. Smith (2015) conducted survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews with male and female PGCE students in order to explore their professional aspirations and perceptions of educational leadership. She found that “even at the start of their careers, female teachers are seemingly less inclined than their male colleagues to envisage themselves in the most senior posts” (*ibid.* p. 873). Some female teachers perceived headship as being too far removed from the classroom and therefore did not consider the possibility that headship might offer opportunities for “effecting positive change” (*ibid.* p. 874). Other female student teachers did not believe themselves as having the right characteristics for headship and perceived the responsibility attached to the role to be daunting. Smith concluded that these women saw “headship as a role that would control rather than empower them” (*ibid.* p. 874). Interestingly, Thomson et al. (2003) argue that negative impressions of educational leadership such as those explored above are supported and exacerbated by media representations of such posts. The authors found that the American media representation of headteachers’ work is “one of long hours, low salary, high stress and sudden death from high stakes

accountability” (*ibid.* p. 118). Noting that media representations can have a negative influence on the headteacher ‘pipeline’, the authors suggest that it is important to “focus not only on the reasons why the job is unattractive, but also on the complex reasons why it is worth doing” (*ibid.* p. 128). This is a point also made by MacBeath and colleagues (2009) who maintain that by accurately “modelling” the headteacher role and emphasising the idea that many headteachers spend “a greater amount of time than is perceived by teachers on activities that teachers appear to value” more positive impressions of headship may be formed (p. 56).

Career deputies and the advantages of deputy headship

The literature reviewed above suggests that many factors continue to constrain women’s career options and advancement to secondary headship. Like Rhodes and colleagues (2009), I believe that in the light of such constraint further exploration of the gender differences in teachers’ career trajectories and how “any differences can be better accommodated within evolving leadership learning and transition mechanisms” is needed (p. 463). In making this assertion however I am not suggesting that women are unthinking, passive and wholly constrained by structural and cultural forces. Women and men have the capacity for agentic action. It seems however that within many of the explanations for the under-representation of women in educational leadership explored above there is little acknowledgement of women’s capacity to act and make positive choices about their professional futures. One potential explanation for the under-representation of women in secondary headship focuses on women deputy headteachers’ agency and suggests that women are making the positive choice to remain in a job they enjoy. It is to this potentially more agentic explanation for the relative absence of women in secondary headship that this chapter now turns.

Draper and McMichael (2003a) remind their readers that a proportion of staff of both sexes have “always rejected headship as a career goal” and in doing so suggest that headship is not the height of professional success for every teacher (p. 194). Deputy heads who perceive their careers in this way may choose to remain “career deputies” (MacBeath et al., 2009, p. 10) and therefore perceive

deputy headship to be a “terminal, rather than a transitory career position” (Harvey, 1994, p. 17). Those deputies who feel no desire for promotion may believe that their role offers enough autonomy and responsibility without pursuing headship. Given the prevalence of shared leadership practices in secondary schools (Bush, 2015), deputy headteachers might find that they have enough autonomy to realise their vision for school success and bring about positive change without becoming a headteacher (Draper and McMichael, 2003a). The opportunity that deputy headship offers individuals to lead without shouldering ‘the ultimate responsibility’ may therefore deter deputies from pursuing promotion (Draper and McMichael, 1998).

As discussed above, research has found that some potential aspirants perceive headship to be a less enjoyable and more stressful career option than positions lower down the occupational hierarchy. In a Scottish survey of teachers and headteachers as well as in follow-up interviews with a range of heads, aspirant and non-aspirant deputies and local authorities, MacBeath and colleagues (2009) found that deputy headteachers’ “enjoyment of their current jobs (in particular the time spent with children and the level of responsibility and accountability afforded them) often acted as a deterrent to seeking headship” (p. 8). Likewise, Cranston (2007) found that “high satisfaction in current role” as well as the perception of headship “as a role somewhat different from their current one” to be significant disincentives for deputy headteachers contemplating promotion (p. 121).

In contrast to the positive tone of some of the research findings cited above, Hayes (2005) argues that ‘career deputies’ should not be encouraged as they create a succession challenge within the profession. He argues that potential headteachers are being ‘lost’ to deputy headship, and that ‘career deputies’ are “sitting tenants blocking the route to headship” (p. 1). The author maintains that deputy headship is a valuable training ground for future headteachers, and that the decision to remain a ‘career deputy’ obstructs and limits the advancement of those potential headteachers lower down the school hierarchy. Characterising aspirants to headship as ‘rising stars’, Hayes’ depiction of career deputies as

inactive 'sitting tenants' conceivably demonises those who wish to make the positive choice to stay in a role they enjoy. He appears to be making the blanket, somewhat instrumental assumption that deputy headship is not and cannot be a career in itself. It is perceived to be a short-lived position there to provide 'training for headship'. This perception of the role arguably denies the benefits of keeping experienced members of staff in post.

Enabling influences

The literature concerned with educational leadership tells us much more about the disincentives of headship than the incentives of applying for the role (MacBeath, 2009, p. 409). The literature does however point to some factors which are likely to encourage women to pursue secondary headship. These include networking, mentors and role models (see, for example, Coleman, 2010; Young and McLeod, 2001), values and a sense of vocation (see, for example, Fuller, 2012; NCSL, 2006) and leadership development programmes and opportunities (see, for example, Crawford and Earley, 2011; Draper and McMichael, 2003b). It is to the first of these, networking, mentors and role models, which this chapter now turns.

Networks

Shakeshaft (2006) observes that women are less likely than their male colleagues to have formal or informal networks facilitating their career advancement (p. 502). Professional networks then are argued to be much more likely to be associated with and utilised by men e.g. old boys' networks or clubs (Coleman, 2010). This observation is supported by Moorosi (2010) who found networking opportunities as a form of principal preparation to be absent from the female principals' career histories she obtained in South Africa (p. 559). The reported absence of networking opportunities for women is noteworthy as research has shown that formal and informal networks can be beneficial to those seeking career advancement: Coleman (2010, p. 772 - 779), for instance, argues that women- only networks can be beneficial in the following ways:

- To boost self – esteem and confidence.
- To make advantageous connections with other professionals.

- To offer training and leadership development opportunities.
- To offer role models to younger women.
- To provide a safe space in which to articulate one's views.

There is however evidence to suggest that, despite the advantages above, women-only networks in education are rare. Drawing on two case studies, Coleman (2010) found that women-only networks were less likely to be in operation in education than in more male dominated occupations (p. 773). Furthermore, Perriton (2006) reports that interest in such networks is dwindling as younger women “show a degree of ambivalence (at best) and hostility (at worst) to women’s networks” (p. 101). The author argues that this is a result of a willingness to avoid “the sort of comments already directed at women seen in same-sex conversations in the workplace – the references to ‘mother’s meetings’ or ‘Women’s Institute gatherings’” as well as “the implied narrative of victimhood” some women believe lurks beneath such initiatives (*ibid.* p. 101).

In Coleman’s (2011) view, younger women’s reaction against enterprises such as women only networks may be a result of “a backlash against feminism, with younger women in particular feeling that their fate is in their own hands” (p. 155). This supposed ‘backlash’, referred to briefly in the previous chapter, has been commented on by others in the field. Hall (1996), for instance, reports a ‘fear of feminism’ in her study of female heads. She reports that her participants believed that the term ‘feminist’ was an “explicit social label” with the potential to align an individual with “unwelcome stereotypes” (p. 193). Banyard (2010) argues that this ‘feminist backlash’ may be because many women today “believe that feminism has achieved its aims and that the struggle for equality between women and men is over” (p. 1). She suggests therefore that many women believe that feminism is no longer needed in a society in which women’s equality is protected in law. According to McRobbie (2009), we now live in a society defined by a neo-liberalist discourse in which freedom, equality and empowerment for women are constructed as consumerism and the right to choose; feminism, she argues, has been made to seem ‘aged’ and ‘redundant’. It has been “cast into the shadows” (*ibid.* p. 11). Having explored the benefits of women-only networks as well as

their declining appeal in a supposed 'post-feminist' age, I will now move on to explore the part that role models can play in encouraging women to pursue leadership positions.

Role models

The under-representation of women at the secondary headteacher level means that there are relatively few women headteachers to act as role models to younger women teachers. Singh and colleagues (2006) note that young women are potentially "disadvantaged by the lack of female role models at the top of organisations" (p. 69). Previous studies have however recognised the important part that role models play in both strengthening women's career aspirations and socialising potential aspirants. Young and McLeod (2001) found evidence to suggest that female role models influence senior women's decisions to enter educational administration in the US. By reviewing the educational records of those enrolled onto an educational leadership programme in the state of Iowa and interviewing twenty women administrators and administration students, the authors show the important role that inspirational and encouraging colleagues and superiors play in influencing women's career aspirations and decision-making. Likewise, in her study of women headteachers, Hall (1996) found that role models demonstrated for her participants "the possibility of reaching certain positions (e.g. headship) and a way of doing the job, once it has been achieved" (p. 55). The idea that Hall's participants took cues from their role models about how to behave seems to suggest that looking up to those we hope to emulate in the workplace acts as a form of professional socialisation i.e. we learn to behave by watching and imitating.

Mentors

Shakeshaft (2006) observes that women are less likely than men to have mentors who "help them negotiate careers" (p. 502). A number of researchers however have pointed to the positive influence that mentoring, both informal and formal, can have on women's leadership aspirations. In her review of the literature concerned with the mentoring of women in countries such as the UK, America, Canada and Australia, Ehrich (2008) reports on a substantial body of research

literature that suggests a positive link between mentoring and women's career advancement. In Coleman's (2011) study of sixty women leaders, her participants reported that mentoring had helped them build successful careers. The benefit of mentoring to women is also highlighted by McLay (2008) in her study of male and female headteachers in coeducational independent schools. She found that "all of the women who had been in receipt of mentoring felt it had been useful" (*ibid.* p. 368). It seems that when mentoring is in place for existing and potential headteachers, as MacBeath (2009) observes, "the task of leading a school becomes less daunting to the incumbent and more appealing to the career deputy" (p. 415).

Mentoring is however reliant on those higher up the occupational hierarchy taking the time to mentor younger members of staff. There is a suggestion in the research literature that some women leaders may be unwilling to help more junior women seek career advancement and can, therefore, be thought of as 'queen bees' (see, for example, Jones, 2016). Drawing on narrative data with women managers in the UK Housing sector and higher education, Mavin (2006) found that although senior women acknowledge the challenges and constraints facing women leaders, "they do not feel comfortable taking responsibility for the women in management mantle" (p. 360). Highlighting incidences of 'female misogyny' in her data as well as the important influence of gendered contexts, she raises important questions about the usefulness and implications of the 'queen bee' label, the belief that women are 'natural allies' and "the notion of solidarity behaviour as an advancement strategy for women in management" (*ibid.* p. 361).

A more positive picture of female relationships in the workplace however is painted by Rindfleish (2000). This author interviewed forty one female senior managers in Sydney about the barriers they perceived as confronting women in senior management, and whether they believed there to be a need to support the career advancement of other women. She identified four groups of women - conservatives, moderates, reluctant feminists and definite feminists - and found that those women termed 'conservatives' fitted the 'queen bee' label most closely. This group espoused the belief "that assisting other women into

management positions was a form of social engineering that would undermine their belief in the natural right of free enterprise and merit” (*ibid.* p. 179). These women however represented only ten per cent of the sample (*ibid.* p. 172).

This section of this chapter has explored female relationships at work, and the ways in which networks, role models and mentors can inspire women to pursue secondary headship. The following section will discuss the enabling influence of women’s personal values and their desire to make a difference.

Values and social justice

Research suggests that choosing to become a teacher is often closely related to individuals’ beliefs about the importance of education in our society, as well as altruistic goals such as wanting to ‘make a difference’ to the lives of young people (Wilson et al., 2006; Sabbe and Aelterman, 2007; Heinz, 2015). Similar motivations have also been cited as inspiring women to aspire towards and apply for headship. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) observe that many of the women in the body of literature on gender and educational leadership cite “a strong desire to transform the learning conditions and opportunities for those who have been least well served by current educational policies and practices” as their reason for entering and establishing a career in educational leadership (p. 11). There are a number of research findings that support this observation. For instance, in their mixed methods study of primary school teachers’ careers in England, Thornton and Bricheno (2000) found men to be “more interested in obtaining influence/power/status within their teaching careers, while, in contrast, women appear more frequently to seek promotion in order to use it to make a ‘difference’” (p. 200). Likewise, in their survey of female headteachers in Spanish pre-primary and primary schools, Coronel et al. (2010) found that the majority of their sample chose to become headteachers for altruistic reasons and perceived headship as representing “an opportunity for school improvement” (p. 231).

Research focusing on existing headteachers highlights the capacity that headteachers have to act altruistically and in the pursuit of social justice i.e. “that everyone is equal, no matter what their gender, ethnicity, religion and so on”

(Coleman, 2012, p. 597). In her study of 18 secondary headteachers in the Midlands of England, Fuller (2012) found “some headteachers are engaged in educational leadership that has at its core emancipatory intent” (p. 673). Fuller’s work suggests the possibility of working for and towards social justice and espousing person-centred values as a headteacher despite the managerialist educational culture in which they work. Similarly, Smith (2011b) found that the existing headteachers in her study perceived headship as an “opportunity to enact the ethic of care and their pupil-centred values to maximum effect” (p. 530). In a National College for School Leadership (NCSL, 2006) publication entitled ‘*Go for it: Reasons to be a Headteacher*’, the authors claim that the most commonly cited factor motivating existing headteachers “is the capacity to help children and young people to reach their potential” (p. 6). Alongside improving the life chances of individuals, the publication also indicates that heads are motivated by effecting positive change in the communities in which their schools are situated (*ibid.* p. 11). There is however no information provided in this publication about the research on which these claims are based. It would have been useful if this information had been included.

Leithwood and colleagues (2004) maintain that school leadership “is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 3). The authors therefore hint at the capacity that educational leadership has to positively influence students’ learning and ultimately their life chances. In a NCSL publication concerned with leading schools in challenging circumstances, Flintham (2006) reports on interviews with eight headteachers leading primary, middle and secondary schools in areas of deprivation. He found the headteachers to be motivated by the challenge of helping the most vulnerable in our society and “by the drive to make a difference to both their schools and their communities” (*ibid.* p. 6). This energy is reported to be the result of the headteachers’ core values and egalitarian beliefs. Similar themes are present in the work of Zikhali and Perumal (2016). Focusing their study on twelve female Zimbabwean primary headteachers, the authors found that the emotional pressures of their work were “exacerbated by the difficult socio-economic circumstances that they worked under” (p. 359). They list lack of

parental cooperation, the troubles facing the children within their care and stereotypical gender expectations among sources of emotional stress. Yet, rather than becoming overwhelmed by challenging educational circumstances, the women are described as responding empathically and compassionately to these challenges “so that the welfare of the children could be championed” (*ibid.* p. 360).

In addition to increased chances to make a difference to students’ lives and to bring about positive change, there is evidence to suggest that headship is perceived by some deputies to offer greater opportunities for autonomy and influence. A Scottish study of ten deputy headteachers conducted by Draper and McMichael (1998), for instance, found that some aspirants were motivated to apply for headship because they believed the role would be less fragmented and more satisfying than their current position. They wanted to be responsible for “strategic planning and setting the tone and expectations” of their schools (*ibid.* p. 17). Being able to realise a personal vision of school life then is argued to be an advantage of headship, and one which enables its incumbents to have a positive influence on their students, workforce and community (NCSL, 2006, p. 17).

Leadership development programmes and opportunities

In a study which aimed to investigate gendered patterns in teachers’ career progression, McNamara and colleagues (2010) found that their respondents perceived qualifications and leadership experience “as by far the most important enabler for leadership aspirations” (p. 14). Likewise, Lee et al. (2009) report that the odds of a deputy headteacher aspiring to headship “increased by three times (296.3%) if he/she had more development opportunities” such as attending professional development courses and programmes (p. 200). The authors argue however that the relationship between headteacher aspirations and professional development opportunities requires more attention from policy makers and those working with potential aspirants. Similarly, Coleman (2012) remarks that while leadership courses are beneficial, “there is a case for training aimed specifically

at particular groups of 'outsiders' for example courses aimed at helping women aspire to leadership" (p. 602).

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) is a leadership development programme designed for senior leaders in England and Wales who are "highly motivated to be a headteacher" and are "12 to 18 months from applying for headship posts" (Gov.UK, 2015). The programme was put into place in 1997 and has since then been revised several times (Crawford and Earley, 2011, p. 105). Rhodes and colleagues (2009) describe the NPQH as a "rite of passage to headship" (p. 464) yet found that the NPQH is "unable to mend broken journeys and overcome concerns about headship that were already deeply planted" (p. 465). Interestingly, there is evidence to suggest that not all NPQH candidates aspire towards headship. A survey conducted by Earley and colleagues (2002) found that only 63% of NPQH candidates definitely wanted to become headteachers (p. 24). This suggests that over one third of those in the process of completing a programme designed for aspirant headteachers had reservations about the role and/or their capacity to lead a school. According to the National College of School Leadership, more women than men have completed the NPQH since 2010 (DfE, 2015b). The ongoing under-representation of women in secondary headship may suggest that some women who complete the NPQH are choosing not to pursue headship. While some research has been carried out on the NPQH and its low conversion rate to headship (Rhodes et al., 2009), there appears to be little consideration in the literature about the gendered nature of this phenomenon.

Like the NPQH, Future Leaders is a leadership development programme designed for "current or aspiring senior leaders with the potential to reach headship within three years" (Future Leaders, 2015b). According to Earley and colleagues (2009), Future Leaders was introduced "due to the shortage of teachers taking on senior roles within schools, which is particularly acute in urban areas. It also aims to create a cadre of school leaders who commit their future careers to working in urban complex schools" (p. 296). It is notable that, drawing on data collected as part of an evaluation of the programme, the authors found

that participants perceive themselves to be part of a ‘movement’ (p. 305) with “a strong commitment to social justice and equity and providing opportunities for disadvantaged children” (p. 299). Table 3 outlines data obtained from Future Leaders concerning the numbers of secondary participants on the programme as well as those that have gone on to be headteachers following its completion by gender.

Table 3: *Future Leaders’ participants and headteachers*

No. of Future Leaders’ Secondary Participants (2006 – 2014)	
Male	245
Female	266
Prefer not to say	1
No. of Headteachers after the Future Leaders’ Programme (2006 – 2014)	
Male	66
Female	42
Prefer not to say	0

Source: Future Leaders, 2015a

The evidence shows that, like the NPQH, more women than men have taken part in this leadership development programme, yet more men than women became headteachers following its completion. This data therefore echoes traditional gender dynamics in educational leadership, despite the supposed innovative nature of the programme.

In addition to leadership development programmes, the literature also notes the benefit of headteacher experience to potential aspirants (see, for example, McNamara et al., 2010). Riehl and Byrd (1997) suggest that women need greater access to leadership development opportunities if more women are to take on the challenge of headship. The authors found that part – time leadership experience “appears to greatly help male teachers, especially at the secondary level, to obtain full-time administrative positions, and the same might be true for women if more women had these opportunities” (p. 61). Likewise, in their study of deputy headteachers who had been given the opportunity to take on an acting headteacher post, Draper and McMichael (2003b) found that many respondents felt that ‘acting up’ had “offered a chance to familiarise themselves with headship

and to take on new responsibilities” (p. 76). The authors reported that the opportunity to work as an acting headteacher tended to “confirm the view that the post offered considerable scope and gave many a strong sense of success” (*ibid.* p. 76). Interestingly, the authors found that half of their sample applied for a permanent headship following their acting headteacher experience, and that 17% of those who had decided not to apply perceived “their period as acting heads had been important in influencing that decision” (*ibid.* p. 78). The authors conclude by asserting that “the professional development dimension of acting headship is less acknowledged than it might be” (p. 80).

Diversity, intersectionality and the individual

The literature explored above supports Coleman’s (2007) observation that gender, its presence, performances and norms are “pervasive both throughout time and across national borders” (p. 383). Some of the literature focusing on the barriers and enablers to women’s career advancement however perhaps treats women and men as homogeneous groups, and therefore fails to take into account the divergences and differences that exist between those of the same sex (Fitzgerald, 2003). Variations in socioeconomic status, age, ethnicity and geographic location as well as religious and political beliefs that exist *between* women are potentially obscured when researchers focus solely on the comparison between male and female experience (Fitzgerald, 2003). I would argue, as many in the field have, that essentialised and fixed notions of female experience that result from research focused only on the convergences between women have limited utility (Reay and Ball, 2000). These findings fail to take into account the multiple, fluid and shifting nature of our selves and experiences in the social world (Acker, 2006; Reay and Ball, 2000).

Intersectionality is the “notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, class and sexuality” (Nash, 2008, p. 2). Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality is “rooted in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory” and is considered “a method and a disposition, a heuristic and analytic tool” (Carbado et al., 2013, p. 303). This is the idea that ethnicity, age and a number of other distinct yet interrelated issues need to be considered

while investigating the career advancement of individual women, and the factors contributing to their constraint and enablement in the labour market. Using an intersectional framework, Showunmi and colleagues (2015) found that “gender, ethnicity and other identities played out in British white and minority ethnic women’s constructions and enactment of leadership” (p. 12). In their study of one hundred and thirty British women from various ethnic backgrounds, the authors found an interplay *between* identity strands which suggests that gender is only one of many interdependent constituents of identity to consider when assessing inequality in educational leadership. Likewise, following fifty four interviews with women principals in South Africa, Lumby (2015) concludes “gender is part of a web of identities which creates, sustains or denies status and impacts on working lives” (p. 40). She argues that women are trapped in a “discriminatory web” (*ibid.* p. 28) which is an idea reminiscent of Acker’s (2006) notion of gender, class and race based ‘inequality regimes’. Viewed through an intersectional lens, it is possible to see that the personal and professional identities of the women deputy headteachers that are the focus of this study comprise of a medley of multilayered and interlaced components. The idea that gender is not the only factor to be considered while exploring women’s career experiences and professional aspirations is an argument for complexity, nuance and multiplicity. Coleman (2012) posits that an intersectional lens “may involve looking at the *individual* as a particular case rather than an example of one category of diversity, for example, gender” (p. 605, my italics). She notes that research concerned with the minutia of individual experience would potentially “call for an interpretative research approach, perhaps one that stresses biography and narrative” (*ibid.* p. 605). It seems therefore that in order to avoid essentialised and reductionist conclusions about ‘women deputy headteachers’ as a homogeneous group, and to explore the complex, multifaceted nature of their individual lives, intersectionality is an important feature of my theoretical framework.

A reflexive encounter with structure and agency

The literature concerned with women’s under-representation in secondary headship suggests that women find themselves caught between constraint and enablement, agency and structure. The problem of the relationship between

structure and agency is one “that lies at the heart of social theory and the philosophy of social science” (Thompson, 1989, p. 56). Some theorists have generally perceived these concepts to be opposed or operating in an inflexible dualism; they have tended to emphasise the choices and actions of the individual or the constraining power of social or organisational structures (Elliott, 2001). For instance, certain fields of thought such as phenomenology and interpretative philosophies tend to privilege individual agency, while other theoretical lenses such as structuralist Marxism champion structure (Archer, 2010, p. 225).

The theory of structuration proposed by the sociologist Anthony Giddens links structure and agency. He argues that there is a need to move away from the tendency to augment one concept at the expense of the other if we are to resolve the question of their relationship in our society and presumably our career choices (Elliott, 2001). Within his argument, Giddens places “social practices, practical consciousness, and the reflexive individual at the forefront of theoretical concern” (Tucker, 1998, p. 98).

Thompson (1989) argues “few concepts in the social sciences are more basic and essential, yet more ambiguous and contested, than that of structure” (p. 62). The term is often conceptualised as being heavily linked to the experience of institutional constraint (Elliott, 2001, p. 294). Giddens (1979) however defines ‘structure’ as “as rules and resources, recursively implicated in the production of social systems” (p. 64). He sees structure as consisting of ‘structuring properties’ “which exist only in actual social practices” (Tucker, 1998, p. 84). The creation of ‘social systems’, in Giddens’ view, is linked to social interaction; he argues that systems are reproduced and regularised via social relations “between actors and collectivities” (1979, p. 66). Moving away from the traditional association between structure and constraint, Giddens maintains structure “is always both constraining and enabling” (1984, p. 25). This is the idea that structure has the potential to not only limit human experience and opportunity, but also to facilitate human action. Giddens argues therefore “that there are few situations in which behaviour is determined completely” (Tucker, 1998, p. 85). What follows is an account of Giddens’ structuration theory.

The cognitive functions of reflexivity and rationalisation (illustrated in the centre of Figure 6) are believed to be “directly bound up with the continuity of action” in that they refer to the ways in which actions are carried out (Giddens, 1984, p. 6). The ‘motivation of action’ on the other hand refers to the wants and needs – both known and unknown to our consciousness – that drive us to act in particular ways. As well as focusing on the reflexive and “purposive character of human behaviour” (Giddens, 1979, p. 56), the model also suggests that some of our actions are shaped, situated and ‘bounded’ by unintended consequences. These in turn create unacknowledged conditions of action. Consequences and conditions that exist outside of individual awareness appear to suggest that there are layers of human consciousness that are beyond language or rationalisation. Giddens argues that the agency of the human agent comprises of three levels of cognition and motivation:

1. *The discursive consciousness* – this is the layer of cognition where individuals are able to put into words and give reasons for their social conditions, motivations and behaviours (Giddens, 1984; Tucker, 1998).
2. *The practical consciousness* – this layer consists of the beliefs and knowledge we have about our social conditions, motivations and behaviours that we are unable to put into words. They therefore remain unarticulated (Giddens, 1984; Tucker, 1998).
3. *Unconscious motives/ cognition* – this is the layer of cognition that refers to that which we cannot give verbal expression to and is located deep in our unconscious (Giddens, 1984; Tucker, 1998).

Giddens offers these three terms as a substitute for the Freudian triad of the ego, super-ego and the id (Giddens, 1984, p. 7). He argues that much of what actors know about the social world in which they live resides in their ‘practical consciousness’ (Thompson, 1989, p. 59). Giddens’ arguments suggest that human beings have a good understanding of and a propensity to monitor the activities they engage in. Agents then are presented in Giddens’ work as highly reflexive and knowledgeable.

Linking agency and structure

Giddens (1979, 1984) suggests that there is an interrelationship between social structures and individual human agency. Instead of perceiving the concepts as being independent and opposed in a rigid dualism, Giddens (1984) maintains that human agents and social structures “represent a duality”, one he terms the “duality of structure” (p. 25). While taking autonomous ‘action’ in the social world, Giddens (1984) argues, individuals or ‘agents’ not only use social structures in order to act, they also reproduce them or slightly modify them which in turn creates the circumstances for future action, agency and personal choice i.e. “the conditions that make such action possible” (p. 26). Giddens therefore proposes a mobile, fluid and mutually dependent relationship between structure and agency. The two concepts are perceived to “presuppose one another” (Giddens, 1979, p. 53). Structure (often perceived to be constraining) is believed to have “no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day – to – day activity” (Giddens, 1984, p. 26). Structures are therefore reliant on human agents. Giddens’ work allows for the possibility of a malleable society in which social change is possible. Indeed, Giddens (1979) argues that “change, or its potentiality, is thus inherent in all moments of social reproduction” (p. 114). In an attempt to sum up Giddens’ structuration theory, Archer (2010) states “what Giddens is seeking to enfold here are two views of social institutions – institutions as causes of action (which has certain deterministic overtones) and institutions as embodiments of action (which has more voluntaristic connotations)” (p. 229). She argues that by interweaving and collapsing the divide between agency and structure, Giddens also endeavours to dismantle the dualism which is often said to exist between determinism and voluntarism. The two, it seems, become inextricably linked in Giddens’ work.

Knowledgeable actors

At the heart of Giddens’ theory of structuration lies a particular conception of the individual as agentic and reflexive. Human beings, in Giddens’ view, “are neither ‘cultural dopes’ nor mere ‘supports’ of social relations, but are skilful actors who know a great deal about the world in which they act” (Thompson, 1989, p. 58). Individuals are reflexive, capable of monitoring their actions and articulating

reasons for their behaviour. Agency is therefore linked with knowledge, reason and intelligence (Tucker, 1998). All of these faculties are said to be present when individuals produce and reproduce the social structures surrounding them. Within his theory of structuration then Giddens assigns “a prime role to the knowledgeability of actors in producing and reproducing their society” (Archer, 2010, p. 227). For Giddens (1991), modernity is a ‘risk culture’. It is a social climate that is full of possibility and options but it is also potentially hazardous. In the face of uncertainty, Giddens (1991) argues, individuals need to construct, organise and sustain themselves in a reflexive manner. The individual is said to embark upon a “reflexive project of the self”. Giddens (1991) contends that this project “consists in the sustaining of coherent, continually revised, biographical narratives ... in the context of multiple choice” (p. 5). It seems that through Giddens’ theoretical lens, human beings not only have the agency to control their actions and the social systems around them, but also the power to create and re-create their self-identities.

Giddens’ ideas have been linked to those of Erving Goffman. Arguing that Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective has been underutilised and undervalued by social theorists, Giddens believes that Goffman’s work “captures the central sociological fact that people are skilled agents who engage in very complex social interactions” (Tucker, 1998, p. 78). Goffman (1959) uses a theatrical metaphor to explore the ways in which individuals actively construct and present themselves in our society. At the centre of Goffman’s work, lies the knowledgeable individual who is actively engaging in impression management, “staging a character” (p. 203) and presenting themselves in a particular way to the external world. This idea of constructed and performed selves resonates with Stephen Ball’s idea of fabrications i.e. versions of an organisation/ person which do not exist but are “produced purposefully in order ‘to be accountable’” (Ball, 2003, p. 224). For Goffman (1959), the individual is “a harried fabricator of impressions involved in the all-too-human task of staging a performance” (p. 244). In presenting oneself, he argues, we utilise rehearsed ‘scripts’, make good use of our ‘settings’ and ‘make up’ our personal appearance and mannerisms.

In his work, Goffman distinguishes between the 'front stage' and the 'back stage' regions of this performance of the self. 'Front stage' is where our performances take place. This is a space where we manipulate our audience members into thinking we 'are' a particular way. Yet our performances are carefully composed and crafted in 'a back region' or 'backstage'. It is in this 'back region' "that illusions and impressions are openly constructed" and we learn to manage impressions of ourselves (Goffman, 1959, p. 114). This region however is kept hidden from all observers. Access to this region of a performance, Goffman (1959) argues, is "controlled not only by the performers but by others. Individuals voluntarily stay away from regions into which they have not been invited" (*ibid.* p. 223). For Giddens (1979), "Goffman's contrast between front and back regions in which social performances are carried on is one of great interest" (p. 207). At the crux of Goffman's work is an image of the individual who is actively organising and controlling their activities to give off a particular impression of themselves. This performance is bounded but also assisted by the systems or institutions surrounding him or her. Giddens (1984) maintains that Goffman, along with ethnomethodology, helped to establish that "the routinized character of most social activity is something that has to be 'worked at' continually by those who sustain it in their day-to-day conduct" (p. 86). Giddens' work provides a useful lens through which to view the career histories and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. It emphasises the agency and knowledgeability of the individual deputy headteacher as well as their capacity to act in the face of structural constraint. This, therefore, is an important feature of my theoretical framework.

There have been several critiques of Giddens' work. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on those of Margaret S. Archer and John B. Thompson. Critiquing structuration theory, Archer argues that it is necessary to treat both concepts as analytically separate. She states that a clear distinction between structure and agency allows for a greater degree of theorising about the relationship between the two concepts and the circumstances in which either concept thrives or predominates (Archer, 2010, p. 247). One of Archer's main criticisms of Giddens' work is that he "cannot acknowledge that structure and

action work on different time intervals ... structure logically predates the action(s) which transform it" (Archer, 2010, p. 238). She believes to collapse or conflate the two concepts into one another is to conceal such differences. Another of Archer's criticisms focuses on the lack of answers that Giddens gives to 'when' questions. She asks "when can actors be transformative (which involves specification of degrees of freedom) and when are they trapped into replication (which involves specification of the stringency of constraints)?" (p. 231). She maintains that Giddens' theory of structuration does not stipulate the conditions under which voluntarism and/or determinism will occur and therefore "these different possibilities remain undifferentiated by Giddens" (Archer, 2010, p. 231). Above all, Archer accuses Giddens of augmenting voluntarism and diminishing constraint (p. 232). She states that Giddens' theory of structuration "produces a complementary neglect of institutional characteristics in their own right. What this omits are characteristics of which people may well be aware ... but which constrain them nonetheless" (Archer, 2010, p. 232 - 3). Archer (2010) believes constraint is hard-wearing and that by underestimating its power Giddens "artificially inflates the degrees of freedom for action" (p. 234).

John B. Thompson's (1989) critique of Giddens' theory of structuration focuses on two points: (1) Giddens' definition of structure and (2) the role of structural constraint. He observes, "Giddens' proposal to conceive of structure in terms of rules and resources is of questionable value, for it is a proposal which generates more confusion than it dispels and which tends to obscure some important issues" (*ibid.* p. 62). He argues that 'rules' and 'resources' do little to help readers comprehend the nature of social structures. Furthermore, he argues that Giddens' definition of a 'rule' is shrouded in ambiguity. Giddens, Thompson (1989) maintains, "does little to clarify the precise character of the rules which could be said, on Giddens' account, to comprise social structure" (*ibid.* p. 64).

Like Archer (2010), Thompson (1989) also accuses Giddens of underplaying or neglecting the role of structural constraint in our society. The author questions "whether, in stressing the enabling character of structure, Giddens does justice to the role of structural constraint ... In what senses do these rules operate as

constraints on possible courses of action?" (*ibid.* p. 72). In his analysis of Giddens' work, Thompson (1989) observes that there are circumstances in which "structural constraint may so limit the options of the individual that agency is effectively dissolved" (p. 73). Like Archer (2010), he concludes by arguing that structure and agency are "neither contradictory nor complementary terms, but rather two poles which stand in a relation of tension with each other" (*ibid.* p. 75).

Margaret Archer and the internal conversation

Giddens' notion of the knowledgeable and reflexive actor is one which I have found to be helpful in my work on women deputy headteachers' professional aspirations. Yet, in my view, a more convincing relationship between agency and structure is posited by Margaret Archer who has "made a significant contribution to the development of critical realism and, more narrowly, to the structure and agency debate" (Akram, 2012, p. 47). Noting that Giddens' structuration theory interconnects agency and structure, Archer proposed a 'morphogenetic approach' in which she endeavours to preserve the dichotomy between agency and structure in order to explore the interaction between them (Archer, 2010; King, 2010). Archer (1995) defines her morphogenetic perspective in the following way:

The 'morpho' element is an acknowledgement that society has no pre-set form or preferred state: the 'genetic' part is a recognition that it takes its shape from, and is formed by, agents, originating from the intended and unintended consequences of their activities (p. 5).

Archer (1995) argues that within this definition there is a recognition that structure and agency "have to be related rather than conflated" (p. 6). In her later work, Archer suggests that reflexivity is the means by which individuals navigate social structures and forms of constraint. She perceives this reflexive process to be mediatory i.e. "human reflexive deliberations play a crucial role in mediating between" the "distinctive and irreducible properties and powers" of structure and agency (Archer, 2003, p. 14). Within her work, Archer defines 'reflexivity' as "the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa" (Archer, 2007, p. 4). The issue of reflexivity can also be found in Giddens' work on the 'reflexive

project of the self'. He defines this as "the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives" (Giddens, 1991, p. 244). This is perceived to be an ongoing process through which we create "coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (*ibid.* p. 5). This is different to Archer's reflexive process which is said to be an activity that occurs within our own minds, and is the means through which we evaluate and make sense of the world around us (Archer, 2007, p. 4). Archer calls this reflexive process 'the internal conversation' and, in doing so, suggests a concern with the introspection that individuals engage in. Writing in 2003, Archer defines the 'internal conversation' as the mechanism "through which reflexivity towards self, society and the relationship between them is exercised" (p. 9).

Perceiving human beings to be 'fundamentally evaluative', Archer argues that this interplay between structure and agency, objective forces and subjective action, comprises of three stages:

1. Structural and cultural properties objectively shape the situations that agents confront involuntarily, and inter alia possess generative powers of constraint and enablement in relation to
2. Subjects' own constellations of concerns, as subjectively defined in relation to the three orders of natural reality: nature, practice and the social.
3. Courses of action are produced through the reflexive deliberations of subjects who subjectively determine their practical projects in relation to their objective circumstances (Archer, 2007, p. 16)

Our internal dialogue then is said to not only mediate the influence of the social, cultural and political structures that shape our lived experiences, but also to govern our response or 'stance' towards them (Archer, 2007, p. 15). This theory maintains that our reflexive powers are responsible for our concerns, the projects which we pursue and the practices we adopt (*ibid.* p. 16). Our internal conversations are also said to "define what courses of action we take in given situations" (Archer, 2012, p. 6). It must be noted however that, in emphasising the reflexive, personal power of individuals, Archer is not asserting that people

are simply free to “make what they please of their circumstances” (Archer, 2007, p. 16). She suggests therefore that our positionalities and experiences within society are framed and shaped to a certain degree by the structural forces surrounding us.

Archer (2012) observes that people “who are similarly placed do not respond uniformly” (p. 6). She suggests that even though human beings hold conversations or monologues with themselves, different people exercise the power differently (Caetano, 2015, p. 62). Through the lens of Archer’s work, then, women deputy headteachers confronted with the decision as to whether or not to aspire towards and apply for secondary headship will not think about their circumstances in the same way. One of the key elements of Archer’s theory is that human beings “are radically heterogeneous” and therefore do not share common modes of reflexivity (Archer, 2003, p. 134). The reflexive vehicle they opt to navigate the structure – agency landscape will therefore differ depending on the individual concerned. Conducting empirical research with twenty interviewees, Archer (2003) found internal conversations to be so diverse she outlines three different types of reflexivity: ‘communicative reflexivity’, ‘autonomous reflexivity’ and ‘meta-reflexivity’ (p. 342). A description of these modes can be found in Figure 7.

Figure 7: *Archer’s modes of reflexivity*

Communicative Reflexivity: Internal Conversations need to be confirmed and completed by others before they lead to action.

Autonomous Reflexivity: Internal Conversations are self-contained, leading directly to action.

Meta-Reflexivity: Internal Conversations critically evaluate previous inner dialogues and are critical about effective action in society.

Source: Archer, 2012, p. 13

The first mode of reflexivity Archer outlines is termed ‘communicative reflexivity’. Those exercising this mode are said to operate via what Archer terms, ‘thought and talk’ i.e. they seek to articulate and share their thinking, decision-making and dilemmas with others. Archer (2003) posits that for this group “decisions about what to do, how to act and ultimately, who to be, are held open to the dialogical

influences of those with whom they share their concerns” (p. 167). This mode of reflexivity therefore suggests a certain mistrust in their own as well as faith in others’ perceptions (Archer, 2003, 2007). It is argued that this group experiences a great deal of ‘contextual continuity’, and tend to identify their friends and family as “their ultimate concern” (Archer, 2003, p. 169). It is notable, for the purposes of my study, that Archer’s ‘communicative reflexives’ “accommodated work by voluntarily reducing their occupational aspirations, whenever these clashed with the (perceived) needs of family and friendship” (*ibid.* p. 213). This group are said to be pragmatic, short – term planners who “confront a problem only when it confronts them” (Archer, 2007, p. 275).

The second mode of reflexivity Archer outlines is ‘autonomous reflexivity’. Those labelled autonomous reflexives are said to be satisfied with their own internal conversations and, unlike the communicative reflexives, do not require the opinions of others to take decisive action (Archer, 2003, p. 210). The internal dialogue of autonomous reflexives therefore remains private, and there is argued to be a strong belief among these individualists that “they, and everyone else, must take personal responsibility for themselves” (Archer, 2003, p. 214). This group are argued to be self-reliant and decisive in that “their decision – making process is premeditative and their decisions are premeditated, not spontaneous” (Archer, 2007, p. 286). According to Archer’s theory, autonomous reflexives prioritise work above all else and hence their inter-personal relations and well-being are often “subordinated to this ultimate concern” (Archer, 2003, p. 213). This group are said to “know what they want” and act strategically towards both constraints and enablements to achieve their goals (*ibid.* p. 254). They are believed to aim “to improve upon their social positioning and, if successful, become upwardly socially mobile” (Archer, 2007, p. 98).

The third mode of reflexivity Archer delineates is termed ‘meta-reflexivity’. Meta-reflexives are those who are “reflexive about our own acts of reflexivity ... the internal conversation is not about the proposition itself but about why she herself uttered it” (Archer, 2003, p. 255). This group are said to “go through a great deal of soul searching about why this should be the case, and how they can change

themselves and their comportment to establish the harmony which they seek” (*ibid.* p. 258). Archer labels these individuals ‘idealists’ who are willing to suffer constraint and relinquish enablements “in the attempt to live out their ideal” (Archer, 2007, p. 98). They are said to be “society’s critics” who exhibit “deep concern for the underdog, the oppressed, and the globally deprived ... these are people with a vocation (or in search of one) in which they can invest themselves and which is expressive of their ideal” (Archer, 2003, p. 258). Interestingly, this group are said to be ‘contextually unsettled’, subversive and “constantly evaluate their situations in the light of their concerns and not vice versa. When situations are deemed too disparate from their ideals, then they quit, which is what makes for the biographical volatility of the ‘meta-reflexive’” (Archer, 2003, p. 293).

Archer proposes a fourth mode of reflexivity entitled ‘fractured reflexivity’. This is a group who, “instead of leading to purposeful courses of action, the self-talk of the ‘fractured reflexive’ is primarily expressive. Its effect is to intensify affect” (Archer, 2003, p. 303). It is anticipated however, that for the purposes of my study and its focus on women who successfully fulfil a role which requires a great deal of reflexive power, consideration of the ‘fractured reflexive’ will not be necessary. I believe, however, that the other three modes have a great deal of utility when considering the career histories and professional aspirations of individual women deputy headteachers.

Archer posits that “practising a particular kind of internal conversation ... has consequences for his or her life history” (Archer, 2007, p. 269). Her work also suggests that, although individuals exercise different modes of reflexivity at different times, most people have a dominant form of internal conversation (Archer, 2012, p. 12). One of the central features of this theory is the idea that the ‘stance’ that individuals take towards society, its constraints and enablements, is dependent on the mode of reflexivity exercised. Archer (2003) found that “‘communicative reflexives’ systematically evaded constraints and enablements, ‘autonomous reflexives’ acted strategically toward them, and ‘meta-reflexives’ behaved subversively by absorbing the structural costs of their actions” (p. 300). Modes of reflexivity are therefore said to influence individuals’

perspectives and responses to the situations they find themselves confronted with. In her more recent work, Archer (2012) suggests that social change and decreased 'contextual continuity' in our society influences the mode of internal conversation individuals will adopt. She argues communicative reflexivity is waning in our society because "the speed and penetration of change in the advanced parts of the world is fundamentally destructive of the 'contextual continuity' upon which communicative reflexivity depends" (*ibid.* p. 305). Interestingly, she suggests that meta-reflexivity and fractured reflexivity are becoming more common while levels of autonomous reflexivity remain constant (*ibid.* p. 305)

Archer's theory potentially raises questions about the extent to which a researcher can ever access another individual's 'internal conversation' in order to study it. Archer (2003) addresses this potential criticism by asserting:

All research touching upon our 'attitudes', 'beliefs', 'outlooks' or 'intentions' taps into syntheses of our mental activities; to explore the 'internal conversation' does not entail qualitatively different difficulties. That it is difficult is undeniable, but if it is deemed impossible, then so must all the research topics with which it has just been bracketed (p. 156).

Like Giddens' theory of structuration, Archer's morphogenetic approach and the notion of the internal conversation have been subject to criticism. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on those outlined by Caetano (2015). She argues that "the emphasis assigned to agency, due to the central focus on reflexive deliberations, results in the minimisation of the role of social structures in determining action" (p. 63). The author expresses concern that an emphasis on reflexivity may result in little attention being paid to the role that socialisation and social context play in framing and shaping our lived experiences (*ibid.* p. 64 - 66). This is a concern that is shared by both Akram (2012) and Mutch (2004). Archer's work has also been criticised for privileging internal means of mediation over external forms. Caetano (2015) maintains that "the external conversation people have with one another in specific social contexts should also be taken into account in the explanation of human conduct, as they contribute equally to the definition and negotiation of personal concerns and projects" (p. 67). Here

Caetano seems to be arguing that the concept of 'communicative reflexivity' does not adequately account for the role that others play in our deliberations. I would disagree and cite Archer's assertion that individuals are capable of switching between modes of reflexivity depending on their needs (Archer, 2012, p. 12). It is therefore possible to suggest that autonomous, meta- and fractured reflexives have the capacity within Archer's theory to consult others thus accounting for the role of external conversation in human conduct.

Caetano (2015) proposes a number of other criticisms of Archer's work. She suggests, for instance, that Archer's theory does not "acknowledge that one person can be highly reflexive in certain social situations, but strongly guided by structural constraints in others" (*ibid.* p. 68). Caetano also points out that even though Archer's work is supported by empirical research, her sample narrowly focuses on a "group of educated young people" (*ibid.* p. 70). Consequently, she questions the generalisability of Archer's theory to the wider population. While acknowledging the criticisms outlined by Caetano (2015) and recognising the limitations of any one theory, I have chosen to adopt Archer's theory as a lens through which to view the career histories and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. I believe that through the lens of Margaret Archer's work on the internal conversation, it is possible to perceive the career thinking and the type of reflexivity that individual women exhibit as being shaped by the dynamic interplay between their "nascent 'concerns' (the importance of what they care about) and their 'context' (the continuity or discontinuity of their social environment)" (Archer, 2007, p. 96). Archer's work would allow me to perceive the heterogeneous concerns, decision-making and stances that exist *between* my participants. In opting to utilise this theory, I am making an argument for the role of the individual, heterogeneity and complexity in women deputies' career decision-making. This argument assumes a phenomenological approach and a commitment to harnessing the idiographic, which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3.

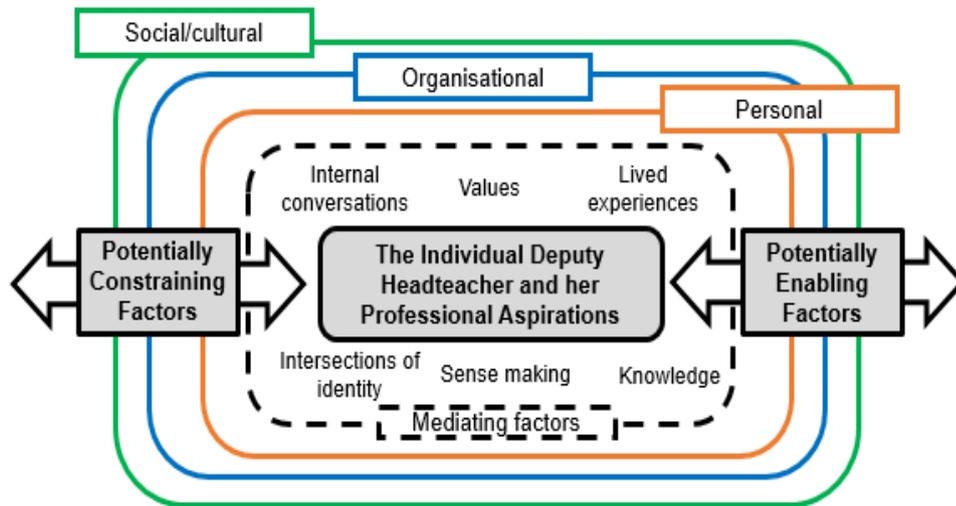
Theoretical framework

This chapter addresses the five ideas on which I have built my theoretical framework. These are:

1. There is evidence to suggest that women face numerous challenges and structural constraints throughout their careers, and these can influence individual women's career advancement and professional aspirations.
2. There is evidence to suggest that enabling factors such as role models and leadership development opportunities can help to inspire potential women aspirants.
3. The theory of intersectionality suggests that there are numerous distinct yet interrelated components of identity (including gender) that need to be considered while investigating the career advancement of women deputies. This implies that women deputy headteachers are a heterogeneous group, and that it is by focusing on the individual that the divergences as well as convergences within this group will emerge.
4. Giddens advances a theory which emphasises the agency and knowledgeability of the individual as well as his or her capacity to act within and in response to structural constraints.
5. Archer posits that individuals mediate constraining and enabling factors via internal conversations. She argues that this reflexive process is not the same for everyone, and that our inner dialogues influence our projects, concerns and decision-making.

These points are illustrated in Figure 8 which seeks to highlight the centrality of the individual deputy headteacher within this thesis.

Figure 8: *Theoretical framework*



Summary

This chapter began by describing the position of women in the global and national labour market. It reviewed evidence to suggest that women are under-represented in numerous leadership positions including secondary headship. The chapter went on to explore a variety of explanations and theories concerned with the constraining and enabling influences women encounter on the road to secondary school leadership. Noting the complex interrelationship between structure and agency within this body of literature, the third section of this chapter explored the work of Anthony Giddens and Margaret Archer. This chapter concluded with an overview of the theoretical framework underpinning my study of the career histories and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. The next chapter describes the research design used in this investigation, which is rooted in prioritising individuals' experiences and is defined by an interpretative phenomenological approach.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

To do research is always to question the way we experience the world.

(Van Manen, 1990, p. 5)

Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored existing literature and theory concerned with gender and educational leadership, as well as theoretical lenses through which to view the experiences and perceptions of women deputy headteachers. In this chapter I describe the research design used in this study. It begins by summarising the aims of the project, and outlining its research questions. The chapter then moves on to explore the feminist principles and ethical framework that guided my research choices. The middle section of this chapter is concerned with the practicalities of the research process. The theoretical foundations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the rationale for employing this methodology as well as the specificities of data collection and data analysis are discussed. Here I highlight the links between the individual participant, phenomenology and IPA's idiographic commitment. I then move on to explore the importance of reflexivity in IPA research. The final part of the chapter concerns the notion of 'quality' in qualitative research. Using criteria put forth by Yardley (2000) and Jonathan Smith (2011a) to structure this discussion, the steps taken to ensure the validity of my work are considered. My positionality as a researcher and the potential limitations of this investigation are also reflected on.

Aims and research questions

This thesis presents a detailed, idiographic examination of how individual women deputy headteachers make sense of their career trajectories in secondary education. This study also aims to explore the ways in which women deputy headteachers, as potential aspirants to headship, perceive the secondary headteacher role. It seeks to gain an insight into participants' lived experiences and how these influence the prospect of their aspiring towards and applying for

headship. Individuals and the idiosyncratic ways in which they understand and ascribe meaning to their social and professional worlds are at the heart of this research. Aiming to explore women's subjective views and experiences in a detailed and in-depth way, this thesis addresses the following open and exploratory research questions:

- How do women deputy headteachers make sense of their career histories?
- How do women deputy headteachers experience deputy headship?
- How do women deputy headteachers perceive secondary headship?
- How do women deputy headteachers envisage their future professional selves?

Taking a feminist perspective

My project, its aims and research questions are informed by the political and ethical thinking of feminist scholars. As I discussed in Chapter 1, feminism is not a singular belief or social movement. Indeed, 'feminist' knowledge positions originate from a variety of value judgements and experiences in our society (Letherby, 2003; Brisolara, 2014). For the purposes of my work, I define a 'feminist perspective' as one that challenges and critiques male privilege. It is a view that is rooted in the belief that we live in a society in which patriarchal power structures, androcentric bias and the oppression of women persists (Stanley and Wise, 1993). The feminist perspective adopted throughout this thesis is intersectional in nature. Intersectionality - "the manner in which multiple aspects of identity may combine in different ways to construct social reality" (Sanchez-Hucles and Davis, 2010, p. 176) - highlights the complexity and nuance inherent in inequality. It rejects the essentialist assumption that women and men are homogeneous groups and, instead, focuses on the multiple identities of individual actors. This perspective acknowledges the diverse and interrelated aspects of social identity as well as "the multiple ways that patterns of power can converge" (Crenshaw, 2010, p. 165). As explored in the previous chapter, by considering identity strands such as ethnicity, class, sexuality and age alongside gender a

much richer understanding of individuals' experiences and perceptions is possible (Cole, 2009).

Overall, then, the feminist perspective advanced in this thesis hinges on the concepts of choice, agency and freedom. I see the feminist project to be that of emancipation and empowerment in that it aims to eradicate inequalities and discrimination. The 'feminist perspective' underpinning my work centres on the belief that *all* human beings regardless of their differences are of equal worth, and should be treated as such (Freedman, 2002).

Ethical implications

Choosing to adopt a feminist perspective has a number of ethical implications for the qualitative researcher. Firstly, it requires researchers to direct their attention towards women and their lived experiences. Feminist scholars (see, for example, Mathison, 2014) highlight the ways in which traditional and dominant ways of knowing have marginalised women's voices. Consequently, doing feminist research necessitates an ethical commitment to uncovering women's "subjugated knowledge", silenced understandings and hidden perceptions (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3). Stanley and Wise (1993) believe feminist research to be 'corrective' in that it is "concerned with filling in the gaps in our knowledge about women" (p. 30). To fulfil this ethical requirement and 'give voice' to the lived experiences and perceptions of women deputy headteachers, I needed to act in accordance with the ethical regulations and codes of practice governing the work of educational researchers. The research detailed in this thesis therefore adheres to the ethical guidelines outlined by the British Educational Research Association (2011), and The University of Leicester 2015 (see Appendix 3 for additional details). Furthermore, all interview data were transcribed, used and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Secondly, adopting a feminist perspective requires a commitment to creating an empowering research process for the individual participant. Feminist researchers question the "legitimacy of research that does not empower oppressed and otherwise invisible groups" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 40). Research conducted

through a feminist lens therefore aims to produce knowledge that is useful both on individual and societal levels (Ramazanoglu, 2002, p. 147). Feminist researchers produce knowledge for and about women because they “feel an obligation to seek opportunities for social good” (Zigo, 2001, p. 353). Aiming to empower my participants, I ensured that the interviews I conducted gave individual deputies the opportunity to critically reflect on their experiences, perceptions and sense making. I aimed to design a study that would illuminate the issues around gender and career advancement as my participants saw them. In the long term, I hope that the wider dissemination of my results will maximise the potential emancipatory benefits of my research.

Thirdly, those adopting a feminist lens aim to foster non-exploitative and collaborative research relationships with their participants (Letherby, 2003). Writing from a feminist perspective, Patai (1991) argues “respect is a minimum condition if we are not to treat others as mere means to our own ends - if we are not, in other words, to reproduce the very practices of domination that we seek to challenge” (p. 148). As a feminist researcher I have an ethical duty to not only safeguard and promote the welfare and respectful treatment of individual participants, but also to ensure the assumptions on which my methodology and research practice are based challenge unquestioned norms and beliefs about power relations and the researcher-participant relationship. In an attempt to foster non-exploitative research relationships with my participants, full and informed consent was obtained from all of those who took part. Every participant was made aware that their participation in this project was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Participant privacy was of the utmost concern. Participants’ names, places of work, colleagues, family members and other identifiable details such as home towns have been anonymised throughout this thesis via the use of pseudonyms. Furthermore, all individual participants were treated fairly and with respect. A compassionate and non-judgmental approach to what was said was taken at all times. I did not want the research process to be perceived as an imposition. Consequently, the time and venue for interviews were determined by each individual participant. Deputies were also given the option of having a face-to-

face or telephone interview. This ensured that the data collection process was as convenient and accessible for participants as possible. Lastly, I ensured that participants were gently warned at the beginning of each interview of the possibility that they might find some of their narrative painful to tell. I reassured participants that they can opt out or stop the interview process at any time.

Finally, a feminist perspective requires the researcher to be highly reflexive (Etherington, 2004). Berger (2015) defines reflexivity as “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (p. 220). Being deliberately self-aware throughout the research process and acknowledging that we cannot step outside of the social world in order to study it presents a “challenge to the norm of ‘objectivity’ that assumes knowledge can be collected in a pure, uncontaminated way” (Letherby, 2011, p. 64). To fulfil this ethical requirement, I kept a reflexive journal while designing, conducting and writing up my research (see Appendix 4 for selected extracts). I wrote regularly in this journal with the intention of being continually alert to both the impact that the research was having on my participants and the underlying assumptions that I was bringing to my work. For instance, keeping a reflexive journal helped me to manage my fore-understandings when analysing my data and to report my findings in a way that was responsible, non-judgmental and did not lead to the creation of new stereotypes. Having defined what I mean by a ‘feminist perspective’ and the ethical implications of this stance, I will now move on to explore the research design employed in this investigation.

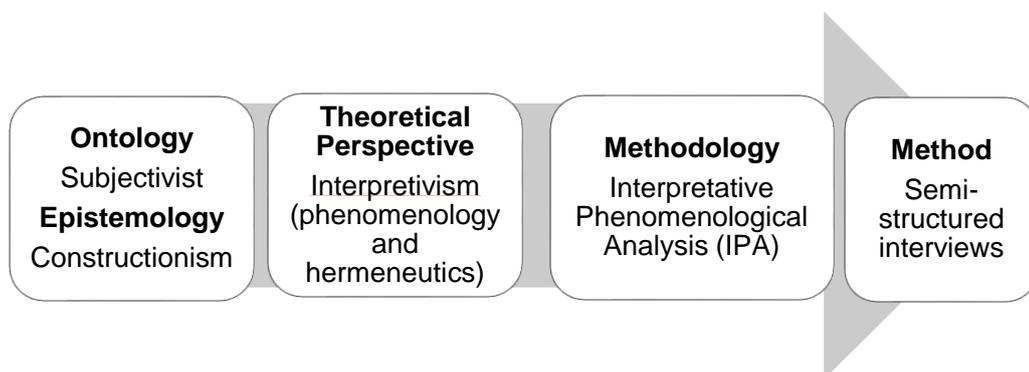
Philosophical underpinnings and methodology

Crotty (1998) argues that there are four basic elements of any research process: (1) epistemology; (2) theoretical perspective; (3) methodology; and (4) research methods. An *epistemology* is a philosophical theory of knowledge that is concerned with the ways in which we think about the social world, “who can be a knower and what can be known” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 5). Willig (2008) states that arriving at one’s epistemological position involves “thinking about the nature

of knowledge itself, about its scope and about the validity and reliability of claims to knowledge” (p. 2). Epistemology is related to ontology, “the study of being” (Crotty, 1998, p. 10) or our assumptions about “the nature of the world” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 23). Crotty (1998) argues that there is an interrelatedness between one’s epistemological and ontological stance. He maintains that issues of ontology and epistemology “arise together” in a research project and that both stances tend to be complementary (Crotty, 1998, p. 11). A *theoretical perspective* is defined as the “philosophical stance informing the methodology” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Crotty argues that there are several theoretical assumptions from which researchers can choose. These include positivist and interpretivist perspectives. A *methodology* is defined as a “strategy, plan of action, process or design” such as grounded theory or action research (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Harding (1987) argues that discussions of methodology and data collection methods are sometimes conflated. She argues for a strict distinction between the two terms delineating methodology as “a theory and analysis of how research should proceed” and *methods* as “techniques for gathering evidence” (Harding, 1987, p. 2). A similar definition is put forth by Crotty (1998) who defines research methods as “the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data” (p. 3). Cited examples include observation and statistical analysis.

An outline of the qualitative research design employed in this thesis can be found in Figure 9. It is based on the framework posited by Crotty (1998) as I found this to be a useful tool in structuring my thinking. The next section of this chapter will explore each of the components of my research design in turn.

Figure 9: *Research design*



Ontological and epistemological stance

IPA is a qualitative approach to research which aims “to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world” (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). It is concerned with the life project of the individual, his or her lived experiences and the particularity of their personal perceptions. IPA researchers seek to gain an “understanding of a person’s relatedness to the world (and to the things in it which matter to them) through the meanings that they make” (Larkin and Thompson, 2011, p. 102). They are interested in individuals’ situated experiences of living, and the ways in which they interact and negotiate within the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they find themselves.

Consistent with the aims and theoretical underpinnings of IPA, a subjectivist ontology is adopted throughout this thesis. This ontological stance perceives the social world as “being constructed by individuals and groups, and hence is the result of experience and thought which is shared through language” (Wood and Smith, 2016, p. 60). Accordingly, social reality is thought of as being fashioned via our perspectives, sense making and lived experiences. It is based on the multiple and idiosyncratic perceptions of the individual. As noted above, a researcher’s ontological assumptions are philosophically linked to their theory of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). Madill et al. (2000) outline a variety of epistemological stances ranging from naïve realism - the belief that there are truths about the world in which we live and it is therefore “largely knowable” (p. 3) - to radical constructionism, a perspective that questions the extent to which there can be “any absolute foundations for knowledge” or any language capable of representing reality (*ibid.* p.12). In the midst of these two extremes lies contextual constructionism, and it is this epistemological position that I adopt throughout my IPA study. Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as:

The view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (p. 42).

Contextual constructionism, a branch of constructionism, suggests that “human acts or ‘events’ are active, dynamic and developmental moments of a continuously changing reality” (Jaeger and Rosnow, 1988, p. 65). Consequently, the researcher and the participant are perceived to be situated within a particular cultural and social context while constructing and interpreting knowledge (Madill et al., 2000). Those who adopt this epistemological stance acknowledge that researchers’ multiple lenses (e.g. professional, social) influence their research (*ibid.* p. 10). The data collected, the analytic process as well as the meaning ascribed to data is therefore perceived to be context-dependent. Those who adopt this epistemology assert that the findings of any research inquiry will vary according to the circumstances in which it was conducted (Madill et al., 2000).

While IPA researchers tend to adopt an epistemological position somewhere between critical realism (which “admits an inherent subjectivity in the production of knowledge” (Madill et al., 2000, p. 3)) and constructionism, Lyons (2007) argues that a contextual constructionist epistemology is particularly compatible with the concerns of IPA (p. 161). Researchers adopting IPA are committed to “exploring, describing, interpreting and situating the means by which our participants make sense of their experiences” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 110). Inspired by the work of Heidegger (1962/1927) (explored below), IPA researchers are concerned with the person-in-context (Larkin et al., 2006), the individual whose experiences, views and sense making are framed and shaped by the contexts in which they are situated and required to negotiate. This perspective complements the epistemological stance of contextual constructionism. Furthermore, an IPA study perceives individuals, both participants and researchers, to be “sense-making creatures” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33). The notion of ‘sense-making’ implies an activity which is idiosyncratic, active and ongoing. This is an idea that is reminiscent of the assumptions of contextual constructionism explored above. Those adopting this epistemological stance contend that “all accounts are imbued with subjectivity” (Madill et al, 2000, p. 17) and “regard absolute truth or knowledge as an ideal that cannot be realised” (Jaeger and Rosnow, 1988, p. 67). In light of its compatibility with IPA, the epistemological position of contextual constructionism underpins this study.

Theoretical perspective

Having outlined my epistemological stance, the next section of this chapter focuses on the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research project. The theoretical perspective of interpretivism is concerned with understanding or *Verstehen* (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative researchers working within an interpretivist paradigm aim to understand social phenomena and the meanings that individuals ascribe to them (Cohen et al., 2011). They focus their attention on our intersubjective existence and interactions in the social world, that is “our ability to communicate with, and make sense of, each other” (Larkin, Eatough and Osborn, 2011, p. 324). The interpretivist approach is sceptical of the image of an objective reality and universal truth embedded within more positivistic or post-positivistic social science. Instead, it advances an argument for interpretation, subjectivity and multiplicity which “gives way to multifaceted images of human behaviour as varied as the situations and contexts supporting them” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 18). Crotty (1998) points out that the “interpretivist approach to human inquiry has appeared historically in many guises” (p. 71). IPA is underpinned by two variants of interpretivist thought: phenomenology and hermeneutics. This chapter will now move on to present an overview of these theoretical perspectives.

Phenomenology

IPA is theoretically linked to phenomenology: a branch of philosophical thought concerned with the examination of experience. Those working in a phenomenological paradigm are concerned with what it means to be human, the “things which matter to us and which constitute our lived world” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). Phenomenologists study “taken-for-granted, everyday examples of the lived world, making explicit the meanings we attach to our human experience” (Finlay, 2011, p. x), as well as our interactions with the world in particular times and spaces. Those taking a phenomenological perspective are concerned with our perceptions of the world and the ways in which a given phenomenon “appears in our consciousness” (Willig, 2008, p. 52). Phenomenologists are not concerned with producing objective truths about life and events. Instead, they seek to unearth subjective perceptions and points of view (Smith et al., 1999, p. 218).

Phenomenological philosophy originated with the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). As Finlay (2011) notes, Husserl aimed to create a new type of science that was concerned with “the description and structural analysis of consciousness as it is given (i.e. how it appears) in experience” (p. 44). He argued that we should ‘go back to the things themselves’, back to our raw, pre-reflexive consciousness and the particular objects of our experience (Smith et al., 2009). Intentionality is a key component of Husserlian phenomenology. The term refers to the idea that our conscious awareness is always directed at some thing or object. Moran (2000) describes intentionality as ‘aboutness’ in that “every act of loving is a loving *of* something, every act of seeing is a seeing *of* something” (p. 16). The idea of the intentional consciousness sought to “transform the distinction between subjects and objects into a correlation between what is experienced (the noema) and the way it is experienced (the noesis)” (Langdrige, 2007, p. 15). In the context of my research, my participants’ day-to-day experience as a deputy headteacher is the noema, whereas the ways in which these experiences are interpreted or perceived is the noesis. The correlation between the experience of ‘doing deputy headship’ and individuals’ perceptions of this experience is characterised as intentionality (Langdrige, 2007).

The concept of epoché (otherwise known as ‘bracketing’ or the ‘phenomenological reduction’) is another key feature of Husserlian phenomenology (Larkin et al., 2011, p. 322). Husserl believed that in order to study conscious experience and ‘essences’ phenomenologists needed to step “outside of our everyday experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 12). This involved temporarily setting aside our ‘natural attitude’ - our assumptions, beliefs and pre-understandings - in order to adopt a more ‘phenomenological attitude’. This is a vantage point that is reflexive and wide, defined by a “preparedness to be open to whatever may emerge rather than prejudging or prestructuring one’s findings” (Finlay, 2008, p. 4). Yet, as Langdrige (2007) remarks, “how much we can truly bracket off our preconceptions is debated hotly within phenomenology” (p. 18). Those who follow Husserl, and therefore subscribe to a transcendental or descriptive phenomenology, believe this to be possible, while hermeneutic or existential phenomenologists “believe that you should try to achieve epoché but

that you can never truly bracket off all your presuppositions and achieve a ‘God’s eye view’” (Langdridge, 2007, p. 18). The latter of these two groups of phenomenologists are influenced by the thinking of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) who notoriously critiqued Husserl’s work (Langdridge, 2007). Through the lens of Heidegger’s work, managing researcher bias in the research process is both an ethical and methodological issue. IPA aligns itself with a more Heideggerian phenomenology (explored below), yet for IPA researchers Husserl’s work remains significant as it highlights “the importance and relevance of a focus on experience and its perception” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21).

Throughout his career, Heidegger came to view Husserlian phenomenology as an “idealist philosophy which had got lost from the essential historicity of human nature” (Moran, 2000, p. 222). In *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger focused on human existence and, in doing so, argued that the philosopher cannot remove oneself from the world in order to study its essence or nature. He posited therefore that “our way of existing must be seen in its historical and cultural context” (Langdridge, 2007, p. 27). Heidegger used the term ‘Dasein’ meaning ‘being – there’ to highlight the idea “that our very nature is to be there – always somewhere, always located and always amidst and involved with some kind of meaningful context” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 106). Through a Heideggerian lens, individuals and the societies in which they are situated are perceived to be mutually constitutive. We, as human beings, are inescapably enmeshed in the world, its phenomena and our social relationships with others (Larkin and Thompson, 2012, p. 102). Consequently, relatedness is seen to be a “fundamental part of our constitution” (Larkin et al., 2011, p. 324) and intersubjectivity is perceived to be a facet of human existence from which we cannot escape (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17).

Alongside Heidegger’s reading of phenomenology, the work of existential phenomenologists Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) adds to the phenomenological theory underpinning IPA. Merleau-Ponty was concerned with the person “as a *body-subject*, with consciousness embedded in the body” (Langdridge, 2007, p. 37). He focused on our embodied

relationship with the world in which we live. For IPA researchers, Merleau-Ponty's work highlights the ways in which the "body shapes the fundamental character of our knowing about the world" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 19). It adds to the phenomenological image of the individual as situated and contextualised. Merleau-Ponty's work relates to my study on the life histories and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers through the embodied performances the women reported requiring to enact as deputies in the professional arena (see Chapter 5). Sartre also contributed to the view of the immersed individual. He posited that 'life projects' guide individuals' existence and that these represent "our fundamental way of seeing ourselves" (Langdrige, 2007, p. 35). A person's 'life project' is said to be ongoing and therefore we, as individuals, are argued to be constantly in the process of creating or 'becoming'. According to Smith et al. (2009), Sartre's work shows "a penetrating analysis of people engaged in projects in the world and the embodied, interpersonal, affective and moral nature of those encounters" (p. 21). Viewing my study through the lens of Sartre's work, it is possible to perceive my participants' careers as ongoing projects guiding both her decision-making and the ways in which she sees herself.

The brief exploration of the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre presented above highlights phenomenologists' concern with the lifeworld of the individual (i.e. "the world as concretely lived" (Langdrige, 2007, p. 39)) as well as the relatedness and contextualised nature of human existence. For IPA researchers, the phenomenological study of participants' lived experiences is an *interpretative* enterprise which focuses on individuals' "attempts to make meanings out of their activities and to the things happening to them" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). IPA, therefore, is informed by both the study of phenomenology *and* hermeneutics. It is to an exploration of hermeneutic philosophy that this chapter now turns.

Hermeneutics

In conjunction with phenomenology, IPA is underpinned by the philosophical study of hermeneutics: the theory of interpretation. Hermeneutics began as the "science of biblical interpretation" (Crotty, 1998, p. 87) and was later expanded

to incorporate a much wider variety of texts, including interview transcripts and data (Smith, 2007). IPA researchers draw on the work of three hermeneutic theorists: Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Gadamer (Smith et al., 2009).

German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) “was one of the first to write systematically about hermeneutics as a generic form” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 22). Perceiving texts to be defined both by the writer’s language and his or her individual perspective, he proposed that textual interpretation required both ‘grammatical’ and ‘psychological’ insight (Smith, 2007, p. 4 - 5). For Schleiermacher, a significant part of the hermeneutic process “involved putting oneself in the mind of the other, sympathetically trying to get inside the original lived experience” of the author (Moran, 2000, p. 275). Smith et al. (2009) argue that Schleiermacher’s thinking is pertinent to the IPA researcher as the analytic process he/she engages in is “geared to learning both about the person providing the account and the subject matter of that account” (p. 37). Interestingly, a more contemporary philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer (explored below), was sceptical of Schleiermacher’s ‘psychologising’ (Smith, 2007, p. 4) and argued that when reading a text (or, in the context of my study, an interview transcript) “we are trying to make sense of the text rather than the author” or research participant (Smith et al., 2009, p. 37). Prominent IPA researchers however have questioned these criticisms and stressed the relevance of Schleiermacher’s insights (*ibid.* p. 37).

Despite phenomenology and hermeneutics being distinct branches of interpretivist thought, Heidegger “presented hermeneutics as a prerequisite to phenomenology” (Shinebourne, 2011b, p. 46 – 7). He brought the two philosophical studies together by arguing that “all our experience is interpreting and encountering what has already been interpreted by ourselves and by others” (Moran, 2000, p. 235). This interpretative stance is particularly apparent in the text *Being and Time* where Heidegger advanced a hermeneutic phenomenology in which “the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in *interpretation*” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 61). Through a Heideggerian lens, the phenomenological project is the study of “how things appear or are covered up”

(Moran, 2000, p. 229). Drawing on Heidegger's work, the IPA researcher "is concerned with examining how a phenomenon appears, and the analyst is implicated in facilitating and making sense of this appearance" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). Researchers employing IPA draw on Heidegger's work and therefore perceive an interrelationship between the studies of hermeneutics and phenomenology; they believe that just as "phenomenological analysis produced by the researcher is always an interpretation of the participant's experience" (Willig, 2008, p. 56-7), our interpretations are always grounded in our lived experiences of the world. This is a realisation that highlights the importance of researcher reflexivity, a topic I explore later on in this chapter.

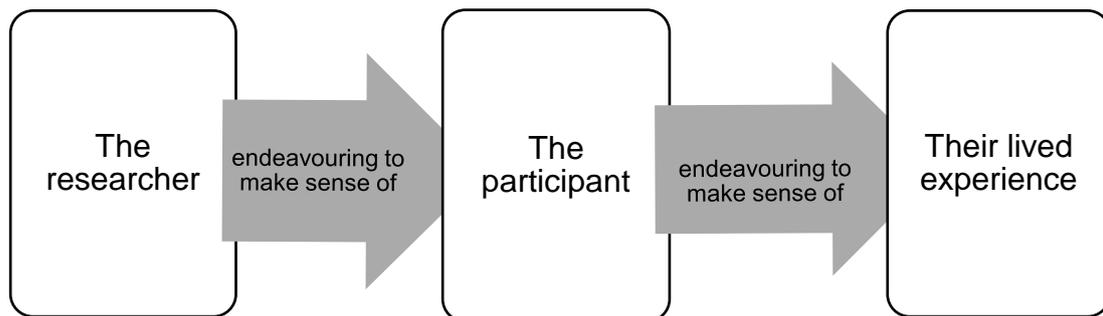
Alongside Schleiermacher and Heidegger, IPA researchers draw on the hermeneutic phenomenology of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002). Gadamer, like Heidegger, emphasised the historical, emergent and cultural situatedness of understanding. Focusing on the contextually bound nature of our perceptions, Gadamer introduced the idea of the 'horizon'. He wrote that a "horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 269). This is the idea that "we each have our own presuppositions, beliefs, predilections and these make up our own horizon (or sphere) of understanding" (Shaw, 2010, p. 235). He posited that language is an integral part of understanding the world in which we live, and that understanding between people is possible "through the *fusions of horizons*, where we acknowledge consensus in our particular worldviews" (Langdrige, 2007, p. 43). Gadamer's insights regarding the historically contingent nature of our understanding and the partiality of one's horizon are borne in mind by those conducting IPA studies.

Jonathan Smith (2011a) observes:

Experience cannot be plucked straightforwardly from the heads of participants, it requires a process of engagement and interpretation on the part of the researcher and this ties IPA to a hermeneutic perspective (p. 10).

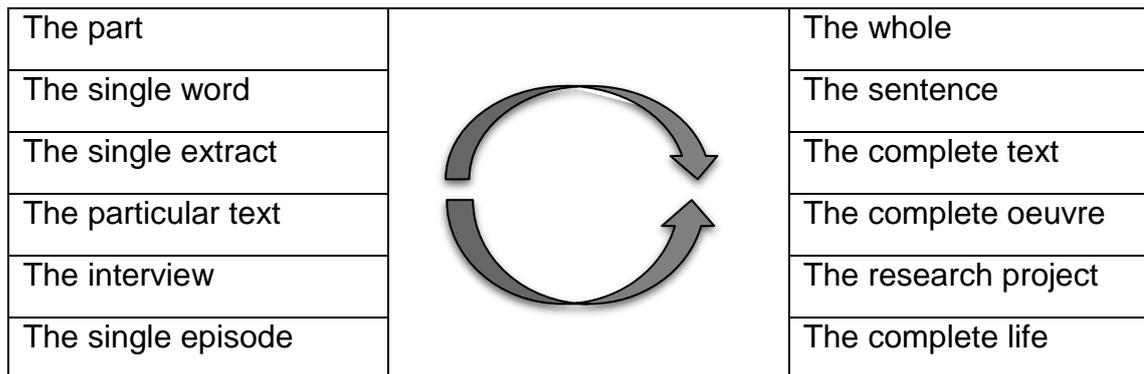
Recognising that we, as researchers, cannot access 'pure' experience or understanding, IPA researchers endeavour to do research which is 'experience close' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33). They aim to examine the ways in which participants make sense of their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them while acknowledging the impossibility of accessing participants' personal worlds directly or completely (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011, p. 264). Researchers employing IPA are therefore said to be engaged in a 'double hermeneutic' i.e. when analysing participants' perceptions the researcher is aiming to make "sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). The concept of the 'double hermeneutic' (found in Figure 10) highlights the idea that IPA "always involves researchers' own interpretations as they try to make sense of what is being said while remaining grounded in the interview text" (Finlay, 2011, p. 141).

Figure 10: *The double hermeneutic*



Another central idea in the IPA literature is the notion of the hermeneutic circle. This idea emphasises the iterative nature of IPA i.e. the idea that IPA researchers "move back and forth through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step, one after the other" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). It also illuminates the non-linear relationship that exists between parts of a text (or the interview transcript) and its entirety. Smith et al. (2009) observe that "'the part' and 'the whole' can thus be understood to describe a number of relationships" (p. 28). These relationships are detailed in Figure 11.

Figure 11: *The hermeneutic circle*



Source: Smith et al., 2009, p. 28

Smith (2007) observes that another important hermeneutic circle in IPA “describes the relationship between the interpreter and that object of interpretation” (p. 5). This hermeneutic circle began, in my case, with my fore-understanding and beliefs about women teachers and their careers. Finlay (2011) describes such assumptions as “a rough and ready approximation” influenced by prior experiences, perceptions and judgements (p. 53). Acknowledging these fore-understandings and trying to remain as open as possible to the data, I moved around the hermeneutic circle as I encountered participants’ narratives i.e. ‘the object of interpretation’. As Smith (2007, p. 6) argues, this challenged and irretrievably changed my fore-understandings. The cycle carried on as I repeatedly listened to the interview interaction, asked questions and tried to make sense of it (*ibid.* p. 6). My understanding of the individual participant’s sense making deepened “by going round the circle again and again” (Finlay, 2011, p. 53).

IPA: An idiographic approach

Idiography is the third theoretical perspective underpinning IPA research (Shinebourne, 2011a, p. 22). An idiographic approach focuses on the idiosyncratic and particular facets of individuals’ lives and experiences. This view of social research is antithetical to the nomothetic approach taken by those with a more positivist epistemological stance. Nomothetic research is “characterised by procedures and methods designed to discover general laws” in an “absolutist, external reality” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 6). Those conducting an IPA study, on the

other hand, demonstrate a commitment to the idiographic by aiming to do justice to the complexity and idiosyncratic nature of human experience. IPA researchers' idiographic commitment is evident on two levels. Firstly, the IPA researcher aims to understand "experiential phenomena from the perspective of particular individuals in particular contexts" (Finlay, 2011, p. 141). IPA's primary concern is with the particular and specific nuances of lived experience. Secondly, the analytic procedure employed in an IPA study "always begins with the detailed reading of the single case" i.e. the lived experiences of one individual (Smith and Eatough, 2007, p. 37 – 8). The process aims to facilitate an in-depth and insightful analysis of an individual's narrative. Only when a thorough, nuanced understanding of a single case is achieved does the researcher move on to consider another case.

Methodology

Having outlined the theoretical underpinnings of IPA, the next section of this chapter focuses specifically on IPA as a methodology, its strengths and limitations. IPA is understood, both within the methodological literature and this thesis, as offering a perspective from which to do qualitative research (Smith et al., 2009; Larkin et al., 2006). To recap, interpretative phenomenological analysis or IPA is an inductive and idiographic methodology which offers researchers "the opportunity to learn from the insights of the experts - research participants themselves" (Reid et al., 2005, p. 20). IPA studies focus on the sense making, perceptions and experiences of individuals. Researchers employing this methodology often use the terms *being-in-the-world*, which highlights their concern with "intentional, embodied and situated" individuals, and *lived experience*, a concept illustrating their interest in "the interpreted and meaningfully lived aspect of our being-in-the world" (Larkin et al., 2011, p. 330). IPA researchers do not believe that 'true' or 'inner' experiences can be captured via the research process. Nor do they aim to engage in a merely descriptive endeavour. Those utilising this approach aim to offer an *interpretative* explanation "of what it means for the participant to have such concerns, within their particular context" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 113). Drawing on the theoretical

insights of hermeneutic phenomenology, IPA is at once “empathic and questioning” (Smith et al., 2009, p.36).

IPA was developed by Jonathan Smith in the field of health psychology (Smith, 1996). Since then the technique has gathered momentum and there is now a considerable corpus of IPA research primarily in the UK and other countries where English is the first language (Jonathan Smith, 2011a, p. 11). The vast amount of these studies “concentrate on specific individuals as they deal with specific situations or events in their lives” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 103). In 2011, Jonathan Smith (2011a) reported that the largest specific area of research to employ IPA is “illness experience, it forming the subject of nearly a quarter of the corpus” (p. 9). My own literature search for studies employing IPA confirmed this finding. It revealed that IPA is predominantly employed in the areas of clinical psychology, occupational health, psychiatry, nursing, biomedical social sciences and health care. The methodology has been used (albeit to a lesser extent) in the study of education. Given the interdisciplinary nature of educational research (van Manen, 1990; Biesta, 2011), this is perhaps not surprising. Appendix 2 outlines a small selection of published IPA studies in the field of education. This illustrates the range of topics being investigated via IPA. Interestingly, however, I found that IPA is not, at the time of writing, commonly used by those studying gender and educational leadership. It is anticipated therefore that this thesis will make a methodological contribution to existing literature in the field. The idiographic nature of IPA has the potential to generate new insights into the career experiences and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. IPA could also add to the range of methodologies used to research gender and educational leadership.

Rationale for selecting IPA

IPA was selected as an appropriate methodology for exploring the career histories and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. My rationale for this choice was based on four interrelated factors. Firstly, my research questions share IPA’s concern with particularity; they hone in on the career trajectories and lived experiences of individuals as opposed to a

statistically generalisable group. Given its idiographic nature, IPA was considered to be capable of highlighting the individual, their subjective sense making, lived experiences and perceptions. Secondly, IPA views participants as 'experiential experts' on the subject under investigation (Smith and Osborn, 2008). This seemed particularly suited to the study of deputy headteachers who, as stated in the previous chapter, are rarely the subject of inquiry (see, for example, Harris et al., 2003). An appropriate methodological approach was considered to be one that had the capacity to illuminate the issues around gender and career advancement as my participants perceived them. It was believed that IPA and its focus on the 'participant as expert' would generate rich, nuanced insights into the experiences of an under-researched group. Thirdly, I felt that the approach allowed for careful consideration of the contexts and spaces in which my participants found themselves. As Smith et al. (2009) remark "sometimes the very choice of IPA as a methodology, the rationale for its adoption, will be centred on the perceived need for sensitivity to context through close engagement with the idiographic and the particular" (p.180). I felt, therefore, that an IPA approach to research would illuminate individuals' relatedness to the personal and professional worlds they found themselves within. Finally, IPA was considered to be consistent with my epistemological stance and my belief that one cannot abandon one's subjectivity, preconceptions and experiences to conduct research. This is the view that "we cannot escape interpretation at any stage, but we can reflect upon our role in producing these interpretations, and we can maintain a commitment to grounding them in our participants' views" (Larkin and Thompson, 2012, p. 103). Overall, then, I believed IPA to be an appropriate methodological approach with the capacity to offer an open and exploratory lens through which to view women teachers' stories and the ways in which they perceive and make sense of their career trajectories.

In the initial phase of the research design process, other qualitative methodologies were considered. Both descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology were investigated due to their emphasis on individuals' lived experiences. Descriptive phenomenology (see, for example, Giorgi and Giorgi, 2008) was rejected on the grounds that I found its concern with the

phenomenological reduction and therefore its lack of an interpretative focus to be incompatible with my beliefs about the role of the researcher and the co-constructed nature of knowledge in social research (Kvale, 2007). I also rejected hermeneutic phenomenology (see, for example, van Manen, 1990). Comparing IPA to modes of hermeneutic phenomenology, I found IPA to be a more “structured version of hermeneutic phenomenology” and therefore a more controlled and workable methodology for myself as a relatively novice researcher (Finlay, 2011, p. 90). IPA enabled me to be rigorous and systematic in the process of collecting, organising and analysing my data, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Discourse analysis was considered as it would facilitate an examination into how individual participants present and construct their career histories via language. My research questions however focus on the ways in which participants make sense of and perceive their lived experiences. Smith (2011a) suggests that such a focus is more suited to an IPA approach than one that employs discourse analysis. He states that the fundamental difference between the two is that while both focus on linguistics to varying degrees, “IPA researchers talk to participants and analyse what they say in order to try to learn about how they are *making sense* of their experience, discourse analysts examine what participants say in order to learn about how they are *constructing accounts* of experience” (Smith, 2011a, p. 10). Given that meaning making and perceptions are very much the focus of this project, I made the decision to reject discourse analysis as a possible methodology.

A grounded theory approach to research was also considered. As Shinebourne (2011b) observes, with its focus on meaning making, as well as its “systematic analysis of a text to identify themes and categories, IPA shares some similarities with grounded theory” (p. 46). Yet, as I engaged with the grounded theory literature, I wondered whether the search for wide-ranging commonalities between participants had the potential to divert my attention away from the individual participant and their lived experiences i.e. the focus of my project. I feared that searching for overarching themes without examining each

participants' narrative in depth risked marginalising individuals' stories and perspectives, and was therefore incompatible with the feminist intentions of this study. Smith et al. (2009) argue that a grounded theory study is likely "to push towards a more conceptual explanatory level based on a larger sample and where the individual accounts can be drawn on to illustrate the resultant theoretical claim" (p. 202). I required an approach to qualitative research which would facilitate a detailed unfurling of a small, homogeneous sample of participants' narratives without taking anything away from their exceptionality. Hoping to avoid a situation whereby individual career histories and aspirations would be drawn on only to illustrate a wider claim or trend, I decided that a grounded theory approach to research would be incongruent with the aims of this project.

To summarise, then, I aimed to conduct an in-depth investigation into how individual women make sense of their career trajectories in education. With this aim in mind and having considered other viable alternatives, I concluded that IPA was a suitable methodology for this study.

The limitations of IPA

As Willig (2008) observes, like all research methodologies, IPA "suffers from several conceptual and practical limitations" (p. 66). Firstly, IPA "believes in a chain of connection between embodied experience, talk about that experience and a participant making sense of, and emotional reaction to, that experience" (Smith, 2011a, p. 10). It suggests that the ways in which we talk about our life events, perceptions and sense making are capable of reflecting and doing justice to the experiences themselves. The role of language in IPA has been subject to criticism by those who believe that "language constructs, rather than describes reality" (Willig, 2008, p. 66). It is argued that participants' narrative accounts are not simply reflections of lived experiences but rather versions of experience created via language. I would contend, however, that the purpose of an IPA study such as the one presented in this thesis is to explore the sense that participants are making of their own lives and realities as opposed to uncovering 'truths' about a singular reality.

Secondly, descriptive phenomenologist Giorgi (2010) argues that there are “no instructions concerning how to make careful descriptions, no hermeneutic principles to follow, no comments about a perspective to be assumed” in IPA (p. 10). The accusation that there is a lack of ‘method’ in this approach is addressed throughout the IPA literature. Smith (2011b), for instance, highlights the advantages of having a set of flexible ‘guidelines’ or ‘steps’ instead of rigid ‘prescriptions’. It is argued that “once one has mastered those steps and seen the finished product, one is more able to recognise that IPA is an approach and sensibility, as much a way of thinking about and seeing, as of doing something” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 81). As a novice researcher, I found that Smith et al.’s (2009) flexible guidelines afforded me support while allowing me the freedom to find my own way forward in organising and analysing the data.

Thirdly, some scholars have questioned IPA’s use of the term ‘cognition’, arguing that phenomenology is “not concerned with understanding cognition, looking inside people to try to understand what is going on in their heads” (Langdrige, 2007, p. 13). For Willig (2008), IPA can be critiqued on the grounds that it uses the term ‘cognition’ to “refer to the subjective quality of experience” (p. 69). Eatough and Smith (2008) however counter this criticism by arguing that those utilising IPA believe “cognitions are not separate functions but an aspect of Being-in-the-world” or our human existence (p. 183).

Finally, another potential criticism of IPA is its use of small sample sizes. By concerning themselves solely with the idiosyncratic, IPA researchers risk being accused of presenting non-representative, atypical cases which tell the reader very little about the universal experience of the phenomenon under investigation. In response to such criticisms, however, Smith and Eatough (2007) argue that larger sample sizes in IPA would lead the analyst into a “trap of being swamped with data and only producing a superficial qualitative analysis” (p. 39). Furthermore, Smith et al. (2009) posit that:

Delving deeper into the particular also takes us closer to the universal. We are thus better positioned to think about how we and other people might deal with the particular situation being explored, how at the deepest level

we share a great deal with a person whose personal circumstances may, at face value, seem entirely separate from our own. Thus in some ways the detail of the individual also brings us closer to significant aspects of the general (p. 31 – 2).

So far this chapter has focused on the theoretical considerations involved in opting to utilise an IPA methodology. The following section will discuss the specificities of data collection and data analysis.

Data collection

Having discussed IPA, its advantages and limitations, I will now move on to explore the data collection method employed in this research. A qualitative, semi-structured approach to interviewing was taken to gain detailed insights into women deputy headteachers' career histories and professional aspirations. Qualitative interviewing has a number of advantages for the IPA researcher. Firstly, in-depth interviews allow researchers to capture the complexities of participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to the phenomenon of study (Englander, 2012; Kvale, 2007). Secondly, in comparison to more structured approaches to data collection, qualitative interviews are more likely to give participants the space and freedom to express "their own perspectives in their own words" (Kvale, 2007, p. 11). This, in turn, is said to generate "fairer and fuller" representations of participants' views (Mason, 2002, p. 66). Thirdly, qualitative interviewing is compatible with the methodological assumption that "all social knowledge is generated as a part and a product of human social experience" (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p. 192). As opposed to 'neutral' collectors of data who are capable of achieving a 'God's eye view', qualitative interviewers perceive themselves to be "active and reflexive in the process of data generation" (Mason, 2002, p. 66). Finally, qualitative interviewing produces rich, detailed and more nuanced data than would be generated by those taking a more quantitative approach to data collection. The in-depth qualitative interview facilitates a deeper form of analysis in which kaleidoscopic selves, perspectives and interpretations emerge.

Those who choose to conduct qualitative interviews believe that “people’s knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality” they aim to investigate (Mason, 2002, p. 63). This belief has numerous implications for the ways in which qualitative interviewers perceive the researcher – participant relationship. Kvale (2007) illustrates two metaphors of the interviewer: the miner and the traveller. The ‘miner’ is an interviewer who perceives the research participant to be a receptacle of hidden knowledge. Within this metaphor, the interviewer is tasked with excavating the precious metal of participant experience without contaminating the phenomenon under investigation (*ibid.* p. 19). The researcher-participant relationship implied within this metaphor appears to be both sterile and instrumental. The metaphor of the interviewer as traveller, on the other hand, perceives the social researcher to be in the midst of a nomadic voyage of knowledge construction and discovery:

The interview traveller, in line with the original Latin meaning of conversation as ‘wandering together with’, walks along with the local inhabitants, asks questions and encourages them to tell their own stories of their lived world (Kvale, 2007, p. 19).

In comparison to the miner metaphor, the researcher-participant relationship presented here appears to be more collaborative and relational. The qualitative research interview is perceived to be a “construction site for knowledge” (Kvale, 2007, p. 7). The study reported on in this thesis was designed with the metaphor of the interviewer as traveller in mind. It aimed to foster collaborative research relationships which acknowledged the ‘experiential expertise’ (Smith and Eatough, 2007) of my participants. I endeavoured to design a research process which would allow individuals the freedom to explore their lived experiences while reflexively acknowledging the presence of the researcher.

IPA is compatible with data collection methods which “invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 56). It is for this reason that in-depth, semi-structured interviewing is a well-established and commonly used approach to data collection in IPA (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Smith, 2011a). To define what I mean by a semi-structured

interview, this thesis uses the definition suggested by Kvale (2007) who saw it as “a planned and flexible interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 149). It is an interviewing technique that requires the researcher to manage a delicate balancing act between “guiding and being led” by the participant and their concerns (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

I chose semi-structured interviewing over any other type of qualitative interview, such as life history or unstructured narrative, for two reasons. Firstly, being located in the centre of a continuum between structured and unstructured interviewing techniques, semi-structured interviews give “the researcher and respondent much more flexibility than the more conventional structured interview, questionnaire or survey” (Smith, 1995, p. 10). The interviewer is therefore less constrained by the interview schedule than in more structured techniques and able to probe participants’ responses to uncover richer data (*ibid.* p. 12). Secondly, although the researcher in a semi-structured interview is guided by a prearranged series of questions, there is a certain freedom within the interview interaction to “follow the respondent’s interests or concerns” (*ibid.* p. 12). This freedom grants the researcher access to the “psychological and social world of the participant as far as is possible” (Smith and Eatough, 2007, p. 42). As a novice interviewer, I found that being able to probe participants’ responses while still having a series of pre-planned questions to be quite reassuring. With these advantages in mind, it was decided that a qualitative, semi-structured approach to interviewing was the most suitable data collection method for this study. Having defined what is meant by a semi-structured interview and outlined some of its advantages, I will now move on to discuss the practicalities of the interviews that I conducted with twelve women deputy headteachers.

Developing and piloting the interview schedule

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed which aimed to explore the career trajectories of women deputy headteachers. The exact nature of the schedule was informed by existing literature on women and educational leadership, and discussions with my supervisor. While creating the schedule, I

followed the guidelines outlined by Smith et al. (2009) on schedule development. These guidelines highlight the importance of open, expansive questions which “do not make too many assumptions about the participant’s experiences or concerns, or lead them towards particular answers” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 60). The open-ended questions included in my schedule focused on the past, the present and the future. They aimed to explore individuals’ career trajectories to date, their present-day lives as deputy headteachers as well as their professional aspirations. The semi-structured interview schedule used in this study was developed with the intention of encouraging participants to explore their careers and subjective experiences in detail.

Drawing on the concept of the hermeneutic circle and its insight that our fore-understandings are permanently altered by our encounters with new information, Kezar (2000) highlights the importance of conducting a pilot study prior to data collection. She argues that piloting research instruments and procedures helps researchers to gain “first-hand, “real world” experience with the issue studied to enhance the research design, conceptualisation, interpretation of findings, and ultimately the results” (*ibid.* p. 385). With these benefits in mind, I piloted my interview schedule with three women participants in January and February 2014 (for participant demographics and findings see Appendix 5). While planning, conducting and evaluating my pilot study, I aimed to develop and test the suitability of my interview schedule and sampling strategy, enhance my interviewing skills and acquaint myself with the recording equipment I intended to use. Although the data collected during pilot interviews has not been incorporated into the findings presented in this thesis, the chance to conduct a pilot study was a valuable opportunity. It helped me to reflect on my positionality as a researcher as well as my research design, sample population and interviewing technique. These reflections are reproduced in Appendix 5. Following the pilot study, I felt able to make meaningful changes to and develop my interview schedule in accordance with my experience of interviewing the participants that took part. I added in questions and made revisions to enhance the clarity and scope of the schedule.

A final version of my interview schedule used in this project can be found in Appendix 6. It must be noted however that while designing my final interview schedule I feared that I would not have enough questions and, as a result, my interviews would be too short and shallow. I eventually opted for a total of fifteen interview questions. During the interviews themselves, however, I found that some of my questions merged into one another and that the probing I engaged in throughout the interviews encouraged rich, lengthy responses. In hindsight, I believe that six to ten open and exploratory questions would have been sufficient.

While designing my research project, I aimed to make the data collection process as convenient and accessible for my participants as possible. Having worked as a teacher, I am fully aware of the limited amount of time that those working in schools have outside of their day-to-day timetables and responsibilities. I recognised, therefore, that I would need to be as flexible and accommodating of participants' schedules and availability as possible. With this in mind, I decided to give participants the option of having a face-to-face or telephone interview. Incorporating this choice into my research design required careful consideration of the strengths and limitations of both modes of interviewing. A table concerning the advantages and disadvantages of telephone interviewing compared to face-to-face interviews can be found in Table 4. Despite the disadvantages of telephone interviewing outlined below, it was decided that the offer of a telephone interview would increase the chances of some potential participants agreeing to take part.

Table 4: Modes of interviewing

Telephone Interviewing	
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some participants may perceive a telephone interview to be more anonymous than a face-to-face interview. Participants may therefore feel more able to share their experiences and perceptions (Trier – Bieniek, 2012; Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). ▪ Telephone interviews may help to reach those who are difficult to access or are unwilling to be interviewed in person (Sturges and Hanrahan, 2004). ▪ Telephone interviews offer a more flexible interview for participants with busy schedules who would be unable to commit to a face-to-face interview (Harvey, 2011). ▪ Telephone interviews are less geographically constrained than face-to-face interviewing (Harvey, 2011).
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Telephone interviews are likely to be shorter than those conducted face-to-face (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013). ▪ Telephone interviews may generate less rapport between the participant and researcher than may be possible in face-to-face interviews (Trier – Bieniek, 2012). ▪ Technological issues may occur, such as recording difficulties. ▪ The researcher is unable to draw on body language and non-verbal cues while interviewing (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2013).

Sampling

Having discussed the stages involved in developing a semi-structured interview schedule, I will now move on to examine the issue of sampling in IPA research. IPA is concerned with quality and depth as opposed to quantity and breadth (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Larkin and Thompson, 2012). Challenging “the traditional linear relationship between ‘number of participants’ and value of research”, IPA studies focus on a small sample of individuals (Reid et al., 2005, p. 22). It was decided during the design phase of my project that the rich, nuanced insights gained from semi-structured interviews with twelve participants would generate enough data to facilitate a detailed and interpretative case-by-case analysis. I felt that a sample size of twelve would allow for both an in-depth examination of individual deputy headteachers’ accounts, and a detailed consideration of the convergences and divergences that exist between participants. It also meant that if individual women dropped out of the study I would still have enough participants to facilitate a rich and nuanced analysis. In

addition to small sample sizes, IPA researchers endeavour to recruit “a fairly homogeneous sample” who will find the topic under investigation meaningful (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49). My research questions are concerned with women deputy headteachers’ lived and future career trajectories. I am interested in the ways in which women deputies, as potential aspirants to headship, make sense of the secondary headteacher role. The participant inclusion criteria I used, therefore, meant that my participants needed to be women who were working as deputy headteachers or vice principals in state secondary schools in England at the time of interview. Consistent with IPA’s commitment to the idiographic, it was anticipated that this inclusion criteria would generate a homogeneous sample who could elucidate a particular and contextualised perspective on secondary headship.

I chose to focus my research on the lived experiences and professional aspirations of twelve women, a group of potential headteacher aspirants. Existing research in this area suggests that women teachers experience their careers differently to their male colleagues (see, for example, Coleman, 2002). It also suggests that men are more likely to achieve headteacher status than women (DfE, 2015a). It could be argued that including men as well as women into my sample would help to establish a clearer picture of this professional group. It would add a comparative dimension to my work and, therefore, allow the professional aspirations of women participants to be analysed alongside and in relation to those of their male counterparts. Although these are logical arguments, I believe that women deputy headteachers are an interesting group to study *per se*. That is, the convergences and divergences within a female group are just as worthy of study as those that exist between a male and female group. I feared that focusing on the similarities and differences between groups risked diverting attention away from the individual participant and the nuances of their lived experiences. My decision to focus on a female only sample is not unique in the field of gender and educational leadership (see, for example, Smith, 2011a; Shah, 2015). Yet, I feel it is necessary to point out that this study was not designed with the intention of excluding or undermining the lived experiences and perspectives of male deputies. Indeed, given the over-representation of men in

secondary headship (DfE, 2015a), an interesting future study may be one that explores the ways in which male deputies experience their careers and make sense of the secondary headteacher role.

In order to recruit a small, homogeneous sample, a snowball sampling strategy was used. This is a non-probability sampling technique whereby “researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These people are then used as informants to identify, or put researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 158). This process is repetitive and accumulative, hence the metaphor of the evolving ‘snowball’ (Noy, 2008). Researchers’ reliance on referral by their participants is a commonly used approach for those employing IPA (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49).

Snowball sampling is claimed to be a good technique for gaining access to populations that are hard to access, those “not easily accessible to researchers through other sampling strategies” (Shinebourne, 2011, p. 54). While working as a secondary school English teacher, I came into contact with very few women deputy headteachers. In the absence of a social network of deputy headteachers to draw on, I anticipated difficulty in gaining access to a suitable sample. It became clear that I required a sampling strategy that would allow me to draw on the referrals of participants. Snowball sampling offered a way forward.

Throughout the research process, I became very conscious of the asymmetrical power relations that may exist between myself (as a relatively inexperienced teacher) and my participants (as experienced senior leaders). When designing my project, I wanted to employ a sampling strategy that would help me to minimise the possibility of hierarchical research relationships. I felt that utilising existing social networks via participant referrals would help me to do this. The social nature of snowball sampling, Cohen et al. (2011) argue, has the capacity to “reduce, even dissolve, asymmetrical power relations between researcher and participants, as the contacts might be built on friendships, peer group membership and personal contacts and because participants can act as

gatekeepers to other participants, and informants exercise control over whom else to involve and refer” (p. 159). The researcher-participant relationship in this study alongside my positionality as a researcher is discussed in more detail later on in this chapter.

Snowball sampling, like all other sampling strategies, has numerous limitations. The initial contact used by the researcher has the capacity to ‘bias’ the sample. Indeed, the first participant interviewed leads the researcher to subsequent contacts and this in turn can lead to “sampling or oversampling of co-operative groups or individuals” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 159). Diversity in terms of background and viewpoint may therefore be limited. This strategy may also exclude certain groups and individuals, those that are entirely dissimilar to the original point of contact or not in professional networks/ friendship groups for instance. Snowball sampling, therefore, “can be seen as a biased sampling technique because it is not random and it selects individuals on the basis of social networks” (Browne, 2005, p. 51). This accusation of bias appears to be linked to the belief that social research should strive for ‘representativeness’ and produce findings that are statistically generalisable. Given the size of my sample, these aims can never be realised nor are they intended. This project has been designed with the aim of shedding light on existing nomothetic research on women teachers’ career experiences and aspirations. I anticipate that my findings therefore will have some degree of “theoretical transferability” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 38). It is however essential that, as a reflexive researcher, I am aware of the limitations of the sampling strategy I intend to employ. Browne (2005) reminds us that no sampling technique is flawless, “rather advantages and disadvantages are subjective and often based on research precepts of what is right and wrong” (p. 57). Having explored the sampling strategy used in this investigation, I will now move on to introduce the demographic characteristics of my participants. A full exploration of participants’ career histories and professional aspirations can be found in the next chapter.

Participants' demographic characteristics

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve women participants between March 2014 and January 2015. Six of the deputies opted for a face-to-face interview, while six opted for a telephone interview. The participants who took part in this study were aged between thirty five and fifty six at the time of interview. All held deputy headteacher or vice principal positions in either academy or local authority secondary schools in England, covering both urban and rural areas. A table of participant characteristics is presented in Table 5 overleaf. In order to protect participants' anonymity, pseudonyms have been used.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study is that my sample consists entirely of white women. While the idiographic nature of this research project means that any conclusions that I arrive at will be tentative and unable to be generalised, I am very conscious that the views of white women cannot be taken to be representative of *all* women (Crenshaw, 2010). Indeed, intersectionality posits that gender, ethnicity and other strands of our social identities intersect to shape individuals' experience. It is therefore necessary to reflect on the potential reasons for the absence of Black and minority ethnic (BME) participants in my sample. A likely explanation concerns the demographic characteristics of the teaching profession in England. The most recent school workforce data (DfE, 2015a) shows that the majority of teachers and senior leaders in England are from a White British background. There is therefore a relatively small pool of BME women deputies working in English secondary schools. This means that the perspectives of this group would have been much harder to access than those from a White British background.

Furthermore, it is notable that most of the women in this sample referred to male partners throughout their career narratives. A minority of women however did not indicate whether their partners were male or female. In terms of sexuality, then, it is difficult to ascertain whether the sample included any lesbian participants. It may be that the sample consisted entirely of heterosexual women or that some

participants did not feel comfortable disclosing their sexuality while being interviewed. This is another limitation of this study.

Table 5: Participant demographics

Name	Age Range	Location	Children	School Type	Deputy Headteacher Experience (years)	Headship Aspirations
Alice	Early 40s	Midlands of England	Yes	Academy	Less than 5 years	Yes
Beth	Early 40s	Midlands of England	No	Community	More than 10 years	Yes
Caitlin	Late 30s	South of England	Yes	Community	Less than 5 years	Yes
Dawn	Early 40s	South of England (originally from Ireland)	No	Voluntary aided	More than 10 years	Yes
Faye	Early 50s	North of England	Yes	Academy	Less than 5 years	No
Katherine	Early 40s	Midlands of England	Yes	Academy	Less than 5 years	Yes
Jennifer	Mid 50s	Midlands of England	Yes	Academy	Less than 5 years	Yes
Lorraine	Late 30s	Midlands of England	Yes	Academy	More than 5 years	Yes
Madeline	Mid 30s	North of England	No	Academy	Less than 5 years	Unsure
Naomi	Mid 40s	North of England	No	Academy	Less than 5 years	Unsure
Sharon	Early 40s	Midlands of England	Yes	Academy	Less than 5 years	Unsure
Sophie	Late 30s	North of England	No	Local Authority	Less than 5 years	Yes

The interview procedure

Before proceeding to examine the reflexive stance taken during this research project, it is necessary to present a transparent account of the steps taken to both collect and analyse my data. What follows is a step-by-step description of the research process.

Ethical clearance was sought from the University of Leicester prior to commencing the study (see Appendix 3). Following ethical approval, I sent potential participants an invitation to be involved in the project (see Appendix 7). I initially used school websites to identify secondary schools in England with women deputy headteachers/ vice principals. After this process, I relied on a snowball sampling strategy (outlined above). Once a participant confirmed she would like to be involved in the project, we arranged a suitable time and place in which the interview would occur. It was at this stage that participants could opt for either a face-to-face interview or telephone interview depending on their preference and availability.

Before starting the interview, participants received an explanation of the project and were given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Participants were made aware that their participation in the project was entirely voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Full, informed consent was obtained and participants were asked to sign and date a participant consent form (see Appendix 8). On obtaining written consent, participants were asked to fill out a brief contextual questionnaire (see Appendix 9). Once this was complete, participants were asked a series of semi – structured interview questions (see Appendix 6). The schedule was used flexibly according to the individual participant's concerns and interests. Probing questions were used when necessary. Each interview lasted for approximately sixty minutes, and was recorded using a digital voice recorder. After the interview, I thanked participants for their involvement and asked them whether there was anything they would like to add. I took some time after each interview to reflect on the interaction and record my thoughts in a reflexive journal (see Appendix 4 for selected extracts). All of the data collected during the interviews were used and

stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I later transcribed each recording verbatim. Following the advice of IPA researchers Smith and Osborn (2008), I included “all the words spoken including false starts; significant pauses, laughs and other features” (p. 65). It was anticipated that a verbatim transcript would aid data analysis.

The analytic process

IPA is an iterative and creative process which involves exploring, commenting on and interpreting an individual case in detail. By clustering initial themes together, super-ordinate (main) and subordinate (secondary) themes are developed from each transcript and, later, the data set as a whole. During the data analysis phase of this project, I followed the guidelines set out by IPA researchers Smith et al. (2009). The stages involved in this process (including signposts to illustrative examples from my analysis) are presented below. Smith and colleagues (2009) advise “the novice embarking on an IPA study for the first time to begin by working closely with the suggested set of steps” (p. 81). As a first time IPA researcher, I adhered to the procedure described below and found the suggested phases to be a useful scaffold. The steps however are not meant to be prescriptive. Indeed, as researchers become more familiar with IPA and its processes, there is scope to use the steps both flexibly and creatively. Gee (2011) observes that as researchers become more confident analysing data in this way, the steps become a ‘road map’ one studies “in advance to chart an overview of a planned journey and, along the way, one refers to it to check whether a part of the route already taken is leading in the right direction” (p. 21).

Step 1: Reading and re-reading

To start the IPA analytic process, I read and re-read a single interview transcript. I also listened to the audio-recording of the interview to ensure that I was as familiar with the participant’s narrative as possible. Following the advice of Smith et al. (2009, p. 82), I recorded my recollections of the interview interaction and any initial observations I had about the transcript in my reflexive journal.

Step 2: Initial noting

The next stage of the process involved writing exploratory notes and comments on the transcript. These initial notes were recorded in the right hand margin of the transcript (see Appendix 11) under the heading 'exploratory coding'. There were three stages to this process. The first stage involved noting down *descriptive comments* (for an example, see the red ink in Appendix 11). Here I wrote down key words or phrases to describe the content of the transcript. The questions asked of the data at this stage can be found in Appendix 10. I did this for the entire transcript before adding *linguistic comments* to the transcript. Examples can be found in green ink in Appendix 11. Linguistic comments focus on the way language is used by the participant. I noted down the rhythm, tone and linguistic devices used by the participant as well as any interesting words or phrases. Questions asked of the data at this stage of the process can be found in Appendix 10. Once again, I did this for the entire transcript before moving on. The final comments to be added to the right hand side of the transcript were *conceptual comments* (see blue ink in Appendix 11). These comments are more interpretative in nature. As Smith et al. (2009) observe "conceptual annotating will usually involve a shift in your focus towards the participant's overarching understanding of the matters that they are discussing" (p. 88). The questions asked of the data while conceptual coding can be found in Appendix 10.

Step 3: Developing emergent themes

The next stage of the IPA process involved looking for emergent themes. This was achieved by "reducing the volume of detail ... whilst maintaining complexity" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 91). Here I worked with my notes instead of the transcript itself. I generated concise theme labels that captured the important details at different parts of the text. The emergent themes were recorded in black ink on the left hand side of the transcript (see Appendix 11).

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

Having a series of emergent themes, I then set about clustering related themes together to ascertain the super-ordinate (main) and subordinate (secondary) themes of the transcript. Using post-it notes, I listed all of the emergent themes

from the transcript. I then moved them around to group related themes together. I found this to be a highly iterative endeavour. Following the advice of Smith et al. (2009), I utilised a number of techniques to do this. I used abstraction (“putting like with like” p. 96), polarisation (searching for “the oppositional relationships between emergent themes” p. 97) and numeration (assess the frequency that particular emergent themes appeared in my analysis). Having searched for connections and clustered my emergent themes, I gave each of my super-ordinate and subordinate themes a title, for example ‘an uncertain future’. I then produced a table detailing each of the super-ordinate themes and subordinate themes that had emerged from my analysis. An example can be found in Appendix 12.

Step 5: Moving on to the next case

Having completed steps 1 to 4 for a single transcript, I then moved on to the next participant’s transcript and repeated the process. Although IPA does lend itself to ascertaining emergent commonalities across the sample, the main purpose of this analytic process is to prioritise individuals’ experiences. I therefore treated each transcript individually and tried to ‘bracket’ my findings from the previous participant’s analysis as far as possible (Smith et al., 2009, p. 100).

Step 6: Identifying patterns across cases

Having completed the process described above for each of the twelve transcripts, I set about the final part of my analysis. This involved looking for connections, convergences and divergences across all twelve cases. Again, I found this to be a creative endeavour which involved using post-it notes to physically group themes together. Appendix 13 illustrates the super-ordinate and subordinate themes I worked with during this time. When I arrived at a set of super-ordinate and subordinate themes for the whole sample and had labelled them accordingly, I created a ‘master table’. Given the space constraints of this thesis, this table has not been reproduced in the appendices. I have however included a condensed version in Appendix 14. The full table can be accessed at the following link: <http://bit.ly/29v1vV3>

Having explored the practicalities of the data collection and data analysis methods employed in this research, I feel it is necessary to return to the subject of reflexivity in qualitative research and explore this in more detail. In this next section, I endeavour to illustrate the reflexive stance I adopted throughout the entire lifecycle of this project.

The importance of reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is arguably “the defining feature of qualitative research” (Finlay, 2002a, p. 211). A reflexive attitude is one that is consciously self-aware and thoughtfully attuned to one’s own pre-understandings, actions and reactions while engaged in research (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2002b). Reflexivity, then, “involves turning your gaze to the self” (Shaw, 2010, p. 234). It enables the recognition that we, as researchers, are inevitably implicated at every stage of the research process. We are enmeshed in the world that we study and therefore it is necessary to reflect on the impact that we have both on our participants and the research projects we conduct. Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of IPA, Shaw (2010) notes that Gadamer’s notion of horizons and Heidegger’s thoughts on our being-in-the-world provide “support for adopting a reflexive attitude in experiential qualitative research” (p. 235). It has been argued, however, that while reflexivity is important it should not be the sole purpose of a qualitative research endeavour (Shaw, 2010). As Pillow (2003) warns, too much self-reflection can descend into narcissism and hence detract from our participants and the ways in which they have made sense of their lived experiences (p. 176). With this warning in mind, I have chosen to explore two of the issues that I encountered during my research project which required a great deal of reflexivity. It is to an exploration of my positionality as a researcher and the task of representing my participants’ career narratives that this chapter now turns.

Researcher positionality and power dynamics

Lumby (2016) observes that “those studying gender inequality grapple with how to position themselves” (p. 37). One of the issues that I have wrestled with throughout this project is how to manage the power imbalance between myself

as a researcher and my participants. I perceived this to be an important consideration as the power dynamics rooted within the qualitative research process have numerous implications, including “the effect of questions asked, and the involvement of the participants” (Ribbens, 1989, p. 581). I am a qualified secondary school teacher and, before embarking upon my PhD in October 2013, I taught English for three years. I am therefore a relatively junior teacher. Furthermore, although I have an MSc. in educational research and I am completing my doctoral work at a research intensive university, I consider myself to be relatively early on in my research journey. My participants, on the other hand, are experienced teachers and leaders. They hold powerful positions in the institutions in which they work. Kvale (2007) argues that in any research interview there will always be a “clear power asymmetry between the researcher and the subject” (p. 14). He argues that the qualitative interview is a “one way” and “instrumental dialogue” in which the researcher is always more powerful than his or her participants (*ibid.* p. 15). The “one way” nature of the research process is evident in the power the researcher has to define the research agenda, as well as in the design and data collection phases of social research. Here educational researchers “have overarching topic control; they guide the talk, they promote it through questions, silence and response tokens and chiefly they decide which particular part of the ‘answer’ to follow up” (Rapley, 2001, p. 315). Qualitative interviews, therefore, generate specific data that is later consumed, questioned and analysed by the researcher through his/her own theoretical lens. The process by which qualitative data are distilled and transformed into research reports is therefore far from neutral. In writing reports, researchers have the power to communicate another’s lived experience and are given a “monopoly of interpretation” (Kvale, 2007, p. 15). Ribbens (1989) argues that in agreeing to take part in your research project, participants “put themselves very much in your hands by exposing themselves in a one-sided relationship” (p. 587).

A number of feminist writers have questioned and challenged the imbalance of power that exists between researchers and their participants. As Ribbens (1989) remarks, a number of feminist scholars have “written about their sense of oppression within the interview situation, and the dilemmas they felt this raised”

(p. 581). Several solutions have been proposed in order to combat this inequity. Feminist sociologist Ann Oakley (1981) for example states “the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship” (p. 41). Yet the extent to which dialogic, non-hierarchical researcher-participant relationships can ever be established in practice is highly debatable. Equally, the establishment of non-hierarchical researcher-participant relationships raises a number of ethical issues. As Cotterill (1992) remarks, “Oakley seems to overlook the moral dilemmas inherent in this practice. She does not mention how easily friendships can be manipulated to obtain source material, nor the uncomfortable fact that interviews set up in the way she describes can be distressing for the women involved” (p. 598).

Although there are certain commonalities between myself and my participants, there are many other ‘intersections’ or differences that could result in the establishment of hierarchical power relations. The fact that these women are not my peers is evident in their age, experience and status. Kvale (2007) states that “elite interviews are with persons who are leaders or experts in a community, people who are usually in powerful positions ... When an interview is established, the prevailing power asymmetry of the interview situation may be canceled out by the powerful position of the elite interviewee” (p. 70). As I mentioned earlier, at 29 years old and having been a qualified teacher for only six years, I am a relatively junior teacher. Consequently, any deputy headteacher I interview will have more teaching experience than me. If I were to apply for a job at their schools, there is a good chance that these women would interview and line manage me. The hierarchical and social norms of the secondary school context denotes they would be my superiors. The hierarchical nature of the relationship that I had with my participants had many implications during the data collection phase of this project. For instance, I found that the deputy headteachers that were willing to be interviewed were very busy and only able to allocate a short amount of time to the interview process. Due to deputies’ numerous responsibilities in the schools in which they work I have also found that research

interviews were prone to last minute cancellation or postponement. The power differentials between myself and my participants as well as my participants' need to manage the image of the schools they worked for meant that I was often given closed, professional answers to any question related to school life or the current educational climate. These answers tended to resemble rehearsed sound bites until probed further.

IPA researchers Smith et al. (2009) state it is important to “think about how to provide participants with access to appropriate support. If there is any chance that the interview may be upsetting for some of your participants, then you will need to provide all of them with access to this support” (p.54). During the design phase of this project, I gave this obligation serious consideration. Yet, given the status and age of my participants as well as the professional nature of the topics discussed, I felt it would seem patronising and inappropriate to advertise access to support. I resolved instead to have the details of a telephone counselling service on hand if required. I realised that this would require very careful handling if used and was something that I reflected on a great deal. It must be noted, however, that a situation did not arise in which I felt it necessary to issue these details. Given the dilemmas described above, it seems too simplistic and in some senses untrue to state that the power in the interviews I conducted was with me, the researcher. As Cotterill (1992) observes:

There can be very real problems for the younger woman interviewing older women ...The older woman may set boundaries for the interview which are difficult, if not impossible, for the younger woman to cross, and thereby questions the nature of hierarchical research relationships which presume the dominant position of the researcher (p. 600).

Although I am an ‘outsider’ in the sense that I do not work in my participants’ schools or occupy a deputy headteacher position, I could also be considered an ‘insider’ as I have worked in educational settings and know how the system in which my participants are located works. Consequently, there was a degree of shared understandings, meanings and vocabulary among myself and my participants. According to Platt (1981), there is a risk that the data can become

less rich and nuanced when “it is assumed that norms are shared” between the researcher and participant (p. 82). Reflecting on her research which involved interviewing her peers, Platt (1981) recalls “asking people about the relevance of career considerations and promotion prospects to their behaviour was awkward because of the shared norm that these things should not be too overtly pursued” (p. 77). She recalls she approached many of her questions with “lengthy preambles and apologies” (*ibid.* p. 77). Arguably, the vocalisation of ambition and career aspiration is not an everyday social practice in schools. These visions of future selves are rarely shared, especially with those you perceive or society dictates to be your subordinates.

The rigid binary between the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ researcher has been challenged by those adopting a poststructuralist lens. Thomson and Gunter (2011) remark “under the influence of postmodern literary theories some researchers suggest that we are all outsiders to each other ... and empirical research has demonstrated that insiders often have (and in undertaking doctoral research, need to have) outsider perspectives and vice versa” (p. 18). Despite this binary remaining dominant in research texts, they argue that the academic researcher is ‘fluid’, he/she fluctuates between the position of outsider and insider depending on a variety of contextual factors. Consequently, the power dynamics in any researcher-participant relationship along with the identity of the researcher are also in flux. They are contingent on a variety of factors. Although this research project has not been conducted through a poststructural lens, researcher fluidity is something that I identify with. I experienced an indefiniteness of self between and within interviews. It is for this reason that I felt it necessary to be continuously alert to where I was in relation to my project and my participants, as well as the potential implications of my positionality and assumptions (Berger, 2015, p. 231). I found that recording my impressions in a reflexive journal aided this process (see Appendix 4 for selected extracts).

(Re) presenting participants’ accounts

Those conducting qualitative research perceive the researcher to be a “central figure who influences, if not actively constructs, the collection, selection and

interpretation of data” (Finlay, 2002a, p. 212). The ways in which I intended to present my participants’ career stories therefore required a great deal of thought and reflexivity. Having analysed my data, I began to write about my participants and their lived experiences in prose, a form Richardson (2001) calls “a deep and totally unnoticed trope used by social researchers” (p. 878). Aiming to retell my participants’ stories, I adopted or, rather, fell back on the type of ‘academic’ writing I am used to employing. Below is an illustrative extract from a text I wrote with the intention of retelling Dawn’s career narrative:

Dawn clearly values learning and listed a number of qualifications she has obtained (line 344 – 346). She experienced early promotion yet argued that at 29 she was “*too young*” (line 226) to be a senior leader. She recalls being “*still a part of the staff group*” (line 227) and having to consciously distance herself from the “*pub culture*” (line 234) in her school. She believed she had to do this in order to maintain a professional distance that would enable her to discipline members of staff when required (Written on Tuesday the 23rd June 2015).

On reading this account I found that the style, tone and form I had used made me feel quite uneasy. I did not like the text, and feared that it did not do justice to the participant as well as the time and trust she had placed in me as a researcher. As I revisited my account of Dawn’s career narrative, I noted that my words occurred more frequently than hers. Dawn’s words were brief, decontextualized and meaningless without my own. I found that my early attempts at ‘interpretation’ put words in her mouth. I also noticed that I was writing in a way that suggested that my version of Dawn’s career narrative was ‘true’ and that no other interpretation was possible. Furthermore, I felt that the text papered over the non-linear idiosyncrasies in Dawn’s narrative. The nuanced richness of her words, experiences and hopes for the future had been neglected in my pursuit to produce a comprehensive account of what was said.

With these observations in mind, I set out to find a more evocative way of presenting participants’ narratives. I looked for a technique which would allow individual voices to emerge and idiosyncrasies to surface. In pursuit of an alternative mode of representing my participants’ career narratives, I came

across poetic representation. This is a technique that Richardson (2001) believes to offer researchers “an opportunity to write about ... people in ways that honour their speech styles, words, rhythms, and syntax” (p. 880). Poetic representations are also said to convey individuals’ emotionality and therefore encourage an empathic reading. Richardson (2001) observes that “poems are consciously constructed to evoke emotion through literary devices such as sound patterns, rhythms, imagery, and page layout” (p. 879). They illuminate what it is to feel and experience the world from another’s point of view (Richardson, 2001). Schwalbe (1995) observes that writing poetry about our participants can “help us to understand them more fully” (p. 404). One of the most commonly cited advantages of poetic representation is that it “allows greater interpretative possibilities for the reader as the results are not filtered through the researcher-dominated interpretation” (Shinebourne, 2012, p. 175). According to Richardson (2000), poetic representations force their readers to regard ‘truth’ as a problematic concept. This is because a poet plays with form, language and rhythm in order to communicate. Poems, therefore, are said to have a “greater likelihood of engaging readers in reflexive analyses of their own interpretative labour” (Richardson, 2001, p. 879). The text is therefore regarded as a co-construction that is fluid and in flux; it is not a singular and unproblematic ‘true’ story. Furthermore, it is suggested that this form of representation allows complexity and that which would otherwise remain hidden to emerge. Referring to the use of poetry in educational research, Cahnmann (2003) contends that poetic practice can uncover the “ever-changing complexity” of education and, in doing so, bring to the fore that which may be obscured in other mediums (p. 29 – 34).

IPA researcher Pnina Shinebourne used poetic representation to present her participants’ accounts of addiction and recovery. She observed that “poetic representations can enter into the hermeneutic circle together with the descriptive and the interpretative material ... It portrays the individual’s unique story, using the participant’s own words, in a holistic manner” (Shinebourne, 2012, p. 182). Consequently, she found this technique to be compatible with IPA and its aim to explore the individual’s sense making and lived experiences. Drawing on

Shinebourne's observations, I have chosen to represent my participants' career narratives in poetic form (see Chapter 4). Each of the poems presented in this thesis aims to give an insight into participants' lived experiences and the ways in which these influence the likelihood of their aspiring towards and applying for headship. Following Richardson's (2001) approach, the speech style conveyed in each poem belongs to the participant being represented, but the poems, including the ordering of the interview data and poetic devices employed, are my own (p. 883). Inevitably, "the sensibility of the researcher was implicated in the selection, interpretation and presentation" of the poetic material presented in this thesis (Shinebourne, 2012, p. 177). In the interests of transparency, an 'audit trail' for each poem was created. An example can be found in Appendix 15.

Having discussed the reflexive stance adopted throughout this project as well as two key reflexive issues, the final section of this chapter addresses the issue of 'quality' both in qualitative research generally and in IPA.

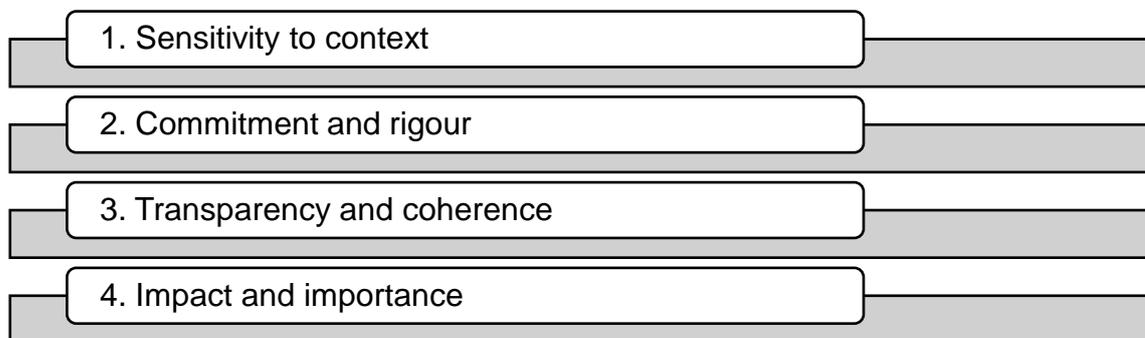
Issues of quality

There is relatively little consensus concerning the standard by which qualitative research should be judged. The topic therefore is "a perennial issue" in social science (Hammersley, 2007, p. 287). Discussions that examine the notion of "quality" in qualitative research tend to feature the terms "validity" and "reliability". Creswell and Miller (2000) define "validity" in qualitative research as "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (p. 124 – 5). It is also about employing a rigorous and transparent methodology. The appropriateness of reliability (i.e. the extent to which a study can be replicated) as a marker of "quality" in qualitative research is disputed. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) for instance "suggest that the canons of reliability for quantitative research may be simply unworkable for qualitative research" (cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 201). It is for this reason that some scholars suggest that 'reliability' is a positivistic term incongruent with a qualitative agenda (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Terms such as "trustworthiness", "authenticity", "dependability" and "fidelity" have been offered as alternatives in order to distinguish qualitative research from its quantitative counterparts (Cohen

et al., 2011, p. 201). There is therefore a variety of terminology and criteria to consider while endeavouring to design a high-quality qualitative study. As Tracy (2010) remarks “our cornucopia of distinct concepts stands in marked contrast to the relative consensus in the quantitative community that good research aims for validity, reliability, generalizability and objectivity” (p. 837).

Recognising there is no definitive means of assessing the “quality” of qualitative research, Yardley (2000) posits a series of characteristics which can be used to assess the validity of qualitative research. She argues that a high-quality study should demonstrate each of the four principles outlined in Figure 12.

Figure 12: *Yardley’s (2000) characteristics of good qualitative research*



Source: Yardley, 2000, p. 219

In order to maximise the “quality” of my study, I aimed to demonstrate each of Yardley’s criteria. Interestingly, “some of the leading qualitative scholars have opposed the development of permanent unvarying standards for qualitative research, suggesting that universal criteria are problematic, if not fruitless” (Tracy, 2010, p. 838). Nevertheless I have found guides to validity useful in a field where structure and coherence in relation to “quality” is both contradictory and lacking. Despite being written from a psychological perspective in the field of health research, I have found Yardley’s criteria to be both a useful way of thinking about interpretative validity and congruent with IPA (Smith et al., 2009). The characteristics she posits as well as the steps I took to adhere to Yardley’s criteria are explored below.

Sensitivity to context

In order to demonstrate sensitivity to context, I conducted a wide-ranging review of the existing literature in the field of gender and educational leadership. This took a broad, international perspective. Yardley (2000) observes “in much qualitative research the sophistication of the interpretation of the data is particularly crucial” (p. 220). It is therefore essential that researchers are aware of the theoretical, methodological and academic context in which their work is situated. I have endeavoured to show this awareness throughout this thesis. A thorough literature review is presented and all findings are linked back to relevant literature, theoretical concepts and empirical results in the field.

For Yardley, sensitivity also necessitates an awareness of the context in which participants are located, its social, cultural and political facets. She remarks “since language, social interaction and culture are understood by most qualitative researchers to be central to the meaning and function of all phenomena, awareness of the socio-cultural setting of the study is also important” (Yardley, 2000, p. 220). As a qualified, experienced teacher, I have personal experience of the culture in which my participants are located. Furthermore, as detailed above, one of my reasons for adopting an IPA approach to research is that it allows for consideration of context. An examination of the educational climate in England, the broader status of women in the labour market as well as perceptions of headship in our society presented in the literature review chapter of this thesis will help to contextualise participants’ career history narratives.

“Sensitivity to context” necessitates a reflective examination of the relationship between researchers and their participants. As Yardley (2000) remarks, researchers’ behaviour and characteristics “influence the balance of power in the process of investigation - an issue which clearly also has a crucial ethical dimension” (p. 221). The researcher - participant relationship, the balance of power as well as my positionality as a researcher have therefore been of central consideration while designing, conducting and evaluating this project. A detailed exploration of this issue can be found earlier in this chapter under the heading ‘researcher positionality and power dynamics’.

Commitment and rigour

Yardley (2000) states that commitment is a central feature of thorough and high-quality qualitative research. She states, “the concept of commitment encompasses prolonged engagement with the topic ... the development of competence and skill in the methods used, and immersion in the relevant data (whether theoretical or empirical)” (Yardley, 2000, p. 221). The semi – structured interviews I conducted required commitment to both my participants and the act of interviewing to ensure that the process produced rich, nuanced data. The relatively open-nature of the questions I asked required attentiveness to individuals’ stories and engagement in the particularities of participants’ narratives. In the context of my study, commitment is also evident in my approach to data analysis. IPA requires complete immersion in individual transcripts in order to fulfil the requirements of each step. It necessitates lengthy engagement with individual career histories. Commitment has also been evident in my willingness to hone my interview and analysis skills throughout my PhD studies. By seeking out and attending relevant training sessions as well as engaging in critical reflection at all stages of the research process, I believe I have demonstrated my commitment to acquiring the necessary research skills to complete this project to the best of my abilities.

Rigour in the context of Yardley’s (2000) work “refers to the resulting completeness of the data collection and analysis. This depends partly on the adequacy of the sample - not in terms of size but in terms of its ability to supply all the information needed for a comprehensive analysis” (p. 221). As I stated earlier, it was decided during the design phase of my project that accounts gathered from semi-structured interviews with twelve participants would generate enough rich data to facilitate a detailed and interpretative analysis. On completing my analysis, I found this to be correct. The steps involved in conducting IPA facilitated comprehensive and thorough engagement with the interview data.

Transparency and coherence

Yardley (2000) states that “the criteria of “transparency and coherence” relate to the clarity and cogency - and hence the rhetorical power or persuasiveness - of

the description and argumentation” (p. 222). A “transparent” thesis necessitates disclosure and honesty regarding the actions taken during the research process. Transparency has been demonstrated in this thesis by including clear descriptions of the steps I used to collect, analyse and present my data. Smith et al. (2009) state researchers “may attempt to enhance transparency by carefully describing how participants were selected, how the interview schedule was constructed and the interview conducted, and what steps were used in analysis” (p. 182). It is anticipated that the present chapter and my appendices have gone some way in fulfilling this aim. Larkin and Thompson (2011) state, good IPA studies include an “appropriate use of extracts and commentary to achieve transparency” as well as an “appropriate level of contextual detail” (p. 112). While writing up my findings, I endeavoured to include substantial excerpts of interview transcription. In accordance with Yardley (2000), I felt that lengthy quotations would allow readers the power to discern for themselves “the patterns identified by the analysis” (p. 222).

Transparency necessitates researcher reflexivity. A possible criticism of my research design concerns researcher bias: the likelihood that my presence, perspectives and opinions will ‘contaminate’ the research process. In response to such criticisms, I argue that researchers are inevitably and unavoidably present in any research process. Stanley and Wise (1993) state that research conducted via a feminist perspective is “rooted in the acknowledgement that all social knowledge is generated as a part and a product of human social experience” (p. 192). This recognition that researchers cannot remove themselves, their own life histories, perceptions and experiences from the research environment in order to study it compels researchers to be open about the ontological and epistemological values as well as the interpretive frameworks that they bring to their research. It also forces researchers to acknowledge the impact that they as individuals have on participants and the interview process. Being reflexive requires researchers to manage their personal biases by being rigorous and systematic at every stage of the research process. One way that I endeavoured to manage my assumptions and fore-understandings was to keep a research journal in order to record all thoughts and impressions (see Appendix

4 for selected extracts). This later assisted me to be as reflexive as possible while writing up this thesis.

As well as being transparent, qualitative research needs to be clear and coherent. In Yardley's work, coherence "describes the "fit" between the research question and the philosophical perspective adopted, and the method of investigation and analysis undertaken" (p. 222). Throughout this chapter, I have tried to make explicit the links between my feminist commitment to harnessing women's perceptions, voices and experiences, my epistemological stance, my theoretical perspective, my methodology and the data collection method I used. Given the study's aims and research questions, I believe the methodological and theoretical decisions I have made during the design phase of this project "fit" in a meaningful way. Yet, as Smith et al (2009) remark, the coherence and transparency of qualitative research such as mine is ultimately "judged by the reader of the finished write – up" (p. 182).

Impact and importance

Yardley (2000) states "the decisive criterion by which any piece of research must be judged is, arguably, its impact and utility" (p. 223). For those who take a more positivistic researcher stance, the usefulness of qualitative research is compromised by a lack of generalisability. Some positivist readers may perceive an inability to detect reliable, large scale patterns in qualitative data and subsequently 'generalise' these to the wider social world to be a significant limitation. Yet, although the rich and 'thick' descriptive reports generated from IPA research cannot facilitate statistical generalisation, Kvale (2007) maintains that nuanced qualitative research can prompt forms of 'analytic generalisation' (p. 127). This is the idea that a rigorous analysis "can help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena or situations" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 171). This approach to generalisation is entirely in-keeping with the views of IPA researchers who state that the results of an idiographic study have the capacity to speak to the analysis and investigation of other comparable groups or settings. Smith et al. (2009) maintain "idiography does not eschew generalisations, but rather prescribes a different way of establishing

those generalisations (Harré, 1979). It locates them in the particular, and hence develops them more cautiously” (p. 29). By taking a rigorous and systematic approach to research, I endeavoured to produce a study that contributes to our understanding of the persistent under-representation of women in secondary headship. I aimed to gain an insight into the ways in which women’s lived experiences frame their subsequent career decisions. As Yardley (2000) remarks, “theoretical worth is often of primary importance in qualitative research. Some analyses are important not because they present a complete and accurate explanation of a particular body of empirical data, but because they draw on empirical material to present a novel, challenging perspective, which opens up new ways of understanding a topic” (p. 223).

Finally, Yardley (2000) states that high-quality qualitative studies should have some form of socio-cultural impact. She argues that “many qualitative researchers consider research (like any other activity) to be inherently political, in the sense that all our speech and actions arise from a particular social context, serve some social purpose and have some social effects” (p. 223). It is anticipated that the study will be of interest to women teachers and leaders as well as those who aspire towards a career in education. The career histories presented and analysed in my thesis may facilitate critical reflection on their own professional aspirations and career plans. My work may also be of interest to those working in the field of gender and educational leadership as well as those tasked with identifying and training potential aspirants to headship. It is anticipated that the findings of my project can be used to open up a dialogue with existing theories and ideas. My work endeavours to contribute to our understanding of women deputy headteachers and their career aspirations.

Quality in IPA

Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) observe that there is “an apparent lack of understanding of how to demonstrate validity in an IPA research project” (p. 757). Endeavouring to rectify this, Smith (2011a) outlines a guide for evaluating the quality of IPA research. While Smith notes the usefulness of Yardley’s (2000) criteria, he states “I have not found them specific enough when confronted with

the particular task of assessing the quality of a set of IPA studies” (Smith, 2011a, p. 15). Working inductively with a colleague to review a variety of IPA studies, Smith (2011a) outlined a series of principles on which the quality of an IPA paper can be judged. He concluded that an ‘acceptable’ IPA paper is one that:

- Adheres to the theoretical principles of IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography.
- Is transparent enough so that the reader can see what was done.
- Presents a coherent, plausible and interesting analysis.
- Includes sufficient sampling from the corpus to show density of evidence for each theme (Smith, 2011a, p. 17).

Building on these criteria, Smith (2011a) argues that a ‘good’ IPA paper will have a clear focus, be based on high quality interview data and take a rigorous approach (p. 24). Furthermore, it will give adequate space to the elaboration of each theme, present an analysis which is interpretative not just descriptive, detail both convergence and divergence among participants and be carefully written (*ibid.* p. 24).

Smith’s criteria provoked many comments from the IPA community. Chamberlain (2011), for instance, took a rather critical stance and stated that “in practice, most of the criteria identified and discussed are quite general in nature, and could apply to any qualitative inquiry using almost any methodology” (p. 52). Smith responded to these comments, clarified points of contention and emphasised the value of quality criteria aimed specifically at those conducting IPA studies (see Smith, 2011b). With this in mind, I chose to present both sets of quality criteria in this chapter. As this thesis progresses, I hope to illustrate to you, the reader, the ways in which I have adhered to both Yardley’s (2000) four principles *and* Smith’s (2011a) IPA criteria while designing, conducting and writing up my study.

Summary

This chapter has described the research design used in this investigation. It has detailed the aims, research questions, feminist politics and ethics adopted throughout my work on the career histories and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. I chose to explore the ethical implications of

adopting a feminist perspective early on in this chapter. In doing so, I hoped to emphasise the centrality of the individual deputy headteacher, her voice and perspectives within this project. Using Crotty's (1998) elements of social research as a framework, I moved on to explore my ontological and epistemological stance, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism, the methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and the techniques used to gather qualitative data. The chapter then went on to describe the semi-structured approach to interviewing, pilot study and sampling strategy used in this investigation. After introducing the demographic characteristics of my participants and outlining the analytic stages involved in IPA, I turned my attention to the issue of reflexivity. Here I took a reflexive stance towards my positionality as a researcher as well as the task of representing my participants' accounts. This chapter concluded with a brief exploration of the issue of 'quality' both in IPA and qualitative research more generally. The chapter that follows moves on to present poetic representations of each of my participants' career narratives.

CHAPTER 4: POETIC REPRESENTATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Writing is never innocent. Writing always inscribes.

(Richardson, 2001, p. 879)

Introduction

This chapter follows on from the previous chapter, which outlined my research design. Here I present poetic representations of each of my participants' accounts. The chapter begins by reflecting on the challenges of capturing the complexities and idiosyncrasies of individuals' career narratives within this thesis. While recognising the impossibility of presenting a full, researcher-free account of each participant's lived experiences, I argue that poetic representations are capable of honouring the emotionality, words and individuality of those I interviewed. With this in mind, I move on to present short poetic snapshots from each of my participants' career stories.

Doing justice to idiosyncrasy

The individual deputy headteacher and the complex nuances of her lived experiences are at the heart of this project. Consequently, I aimed to report my findings in a way that honoured both the individuals who took part in this study and the idiosyncratic facets of their accounts. The constraints of this thesis, however, mean that a full and thorough exploration of each woman's career narrative is not possible. Inevitably, I had to be highly selective as to which details I explored. Yet, while writing this thesis, I was very mindful that the act of presenting my findings had the potential to obscure the more unique or extreme perspectives within the sample.

I chose to adopt an IPA approach to research with the aim of drawing out the exceptional as well as the mainstream. I hoped to arrive at the super-ordinate and subordinate themes required of an IPA analysis without side-lining participants' idiosyncratic or dissenting views. I intended, above all else, to avoid oversimplifying the complexity of my participants' career experiences and

aspirations. As discussed in the previous chapter, the bulk of the IPA analytic process is “pitched at the idiographic level” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 115). Yet, despite the person-centred nature of IPA, the process culminates (quite traditionally) in the emergence of overarching themes that are common across the entire or a subsection of the sample. The final ‘product’ of an IPA analysis (i.e. the super-ordinate and subordinate themes) does not explicitly honour the single case or account. Being cognisant of this, I wanted to create a space within this thesis devoted to individual narratives.

While recognising that social researchers have a “monopoly of interpretation” or “an exclusive privilege to interpret and report what the interviewee really meant” (Kvale, 2007, p. 15), I set about writing poetic representations of each of the women’s narratives with the intention of preserving the women’s own words as well as the complexity and idiosyncrasies of their career stories. As I explored in the previous chapter, short poetic representations “concretise emotions, feelings and moods ... in order to recreate moments of experience” (Richardson, 2001, p. 880). They are capable of enhancing our understanding of the complex reality of working in education (Cahnmann, 2003), and entering into the hermeneutic circle of phenomenological research (Shinebourne, 2012). The poetic representations I have created aim to present another layer of interpretation to the narratives recounted later in this thesis. Sparkes and Douglas (2007) argue that “poetic representations can provide the researcher, reader, and listener with a different and compelling lens through which to view the same scenery and, thereby, understand the data and themselves in alternative and more complex ways” (p. 172). My poetic portraits of each individual participant, then, aim to complement the super-ordinate and subordinate themes explored in the following chapter as well as to provide an additional lens through which to view my participants’ accounts.

Poetic representations are, by their very nature, partial and incomplete. They cannot reflect the entirety of my participants’ lived and imagined career trajectories. The process of writing the poems was therefore reductionist in nature and decisions had to be made as to what to leave out of the final representations.

These decisions were made on a case by case basis, and inclusion was dictated by the events and experiences which appeared to be most salient for the individual participant. The final poems therefore present “a candid photo”, collage or a rich episode of each woman’s lived experiences, her sense making and concerns (Richardson, 2001, p. 880). Faye’s poetic representation, for instance, highlights the ways in which she perceives her role, school and profession to have changed over time, while Madeline’s illustrates her anxiety as she looks towards her personal and professional future. Interestingly, despite the diversity of these representations, within each of the poems it is possible to detect the interaction between agency and structure. Indeed, during their interviews, the women appeared to be acknowledging and making sense of the enabling and constraining forces that have shaped their unique career histories and aspirations. This is an idea that I discuss at length in the subsequent chapter. Demographic information for each participant can be found in the previous chapter (see page 114). This information is a useful accompaniment to the reader’s engagement with the twelve poetic representations below. As I noted in the previous chapter, I followed Richardson’s (2001) approach to construct my poetic representations; I used my participants’ own words and speech patterns, but the sequence of the material and the poetic devices employed within the poems are not necessarily faithful to the original transcript. In the interests of transparency, an ‘audit trail’ for one of the poems can be found in Appendix 15. This further highlights the approach I took to poetically represent my participants’ accounts.

POETIC REPRESENTATIONS

Alice's career narrative: "Hands tied"

I trained in tough schools.

I learnt a lot.

I was lucky.

I wanted to go onto senior leadership.

I ended up leading.

It was time to have children.

My role was more stable than his.

I knew where I wanted to go.

He started working from home.

Without that, it would be very difficult.

I am respected within my position.

I try to walk the talk.

Being a deputy is a very interesting role.

It's planning. It's reactionary.

You're put on the spot.

You have a lot of power.

But you have your hands tied quite often.

Restrained by the headteacher.

You start questioning.

Would I do it this way?

I'm starting my NPQH.

I'd like to be able to make those decisions now.

I'm not sure I want to take on a really heavy school.

In real special measures.

You need your second headships for those sort of things.

Beth's career narrative: "Opportunities"

As a child, I always wanted to be a teacher.

I work with disadvantaged, struggling kids in low income areas.

They are my motivation.

Here they are learning to survive.

Make the most of their lives.

I worked with two male deputies.

I did all the caring roles.

In school, you care for everybody.

The expectation out of school is that you do the same.

That can be really hard to manage.

If it's removed from the kids, I'm not interested.

It's about interactions.

Being with the kids.

It's just priceless.

That's why I wanted to be a teacher.

If I could have everything in the world, I would love to be a headteacher.

Making life better for staff and students.

It would be a similar school to this.

I wouldn't want to go to a good or outstanding school.

I would get very, *very* bored.

But there aren't that many opportunities in this area.

I don't want to relocate.

There aren't that many female headteachers either.

The boys' club.

I can't see where the opportunities are going to come from.

Caitlin's career narrative: "The career thing"

I'm naturally very driven.

I don't ever look at somebody and think 'I want to be like you'.

I just want to be the best at what I do.

I have very high expectations of myself.

I'm my own worst critic.

My husband is a stay-at-home dad, so that I can do the career thing.

The choices we've made as a family have enabled me to do what I do.

I don't see my children in the week.

I'm lucky if I get to read them a story.

The holidays make up for that.

Getting the job as deputy headteacher has been very exciting.

If the head's out, I'm in charge.

Being with the children is still the best part of my job.

Seeing them become better people.

That's why I went into teaching.

They're not easy children.

Beautifully behaved children in a nice leafy private school.

They present a lot of challenges.

You're constantly battling low aspiration.

But that's why I went into teaching.

Headship? It'd be the best job in the world.

My plan is to do it before I'm forty.

Lead a school like this, one that needs turning around.

But it's not a nice place to be a head at the minute.

I don't want to walk into school one day and not have a job anymore.

Dawn's career narrative: "Equality"

Coming over here gave me more opportunities for promotion.

To be deputy head at a very young age.

Too young? Maybe.

You had to be on your toes.

Special measures. High pressure.

The lack of equality in this country.

It really shocked me.

I had this vision from novels.

The school system being for everyone.

I was taken aback.

We don't have children.

I don't think it's compatible.

Several friends are really struggling.

It's almost impossible.

You should work your life around your career.

Seventy, eighty hours a week. Ridiculous.

It is not the work, it is proving.

It is *accountability* – and I mean that in the derogatory way it sounds.

Is this in the best interests of the children?

Or am I just ticking a box for Ofsted?

I've started looking at headships.

To lead a local school that parents want to send their children to.

A school that requires improvement.

A school where my being there makes a difference.

A bog standard comprehensive.

Faye's career narrative: "A bright young thing"

I've been in the same place the whole time.

The name of our school runs through my veins.

I know everybody.

Everybody knows me.

The people at school are part of my whole life and sanity.

Being made vice principal was a wonderful recognition of my time at school.

I definitely have the mother hen role.

Looking after everybody, everything.

A face that people can come and speak to.

I am well-liked and respected.

My crisis? I've been pushed aside.

I am not wanted to do all these jobs anymore.

My new head doesn't see a need.

He's a *bright young thing* with very little experience.

I've had all of my roles stripped off me.

I'm not a man. I'm not a Future Leader.

He's choosing to ignore my experience. My *wealth* of experience.

The profession as a whole seems to have become quite ageist.

I'm of a certain age. I'm not on the scrapheap.

Your choice. Your loss, mate.

Headship? It's a business man's job.

I just wouldn't put myself in the firing line.

We used to be able to care for each other.

Look after each other. Not now.

As long as in my new role I can bring out the best in people, that'll suit me.

Jennifer's career narrative: "I've left it so late"

I came to teaching quite late.

I wanted to be with my daughter more.

I went part-time.

My career has been stifled by commitments.

That happens with women.

I love it so much.

Even though I came to it late.

They wanted a deputy head on secondment.

I'm not young so I thought get in there.

This was the time.

My current school is trying to make a difference.

White working class.

There is nothing wrong with working at Tesco.

But that's not what I want for them.

We're poised to make a big difference.

There's definitely not a typical day.

You are thrown into issues and problems that you have to solve.

I do present the image.

It is like an act, a performance.

It's business dress, heels, a suit.

I want to be a headteacher.

I would love to think that I could make a difference.

In a school that needs a bit of help.

I've left it so long. I've left it so late.

It is something I kick myself for.

Katherine's career narrative: "Nine tenths of the battle"

I was four months pregnant.

The head made me an assistant head.

He put a lot of faith in me.

He was the first person to say:

'I think you can do this'

It's a juggling act.

My husband moved into education.

It was absolutely crucial.

He's not very ambitious at all.

He's very supportive.

Deputy headship. Changing somebody's future.

Students as themselves rather than targets and progress.

The profession is changing though.

Homogenised. A little identikit.

It's *not* one size fits all.

You get to a point where it isn't those above you anymore.

It becomes people below you in the institution.

Inspiration. Nine tenths of the battle is leading people.

I've got loads of people who think I can do it.

Would like me to do it.

In three years' time I will be a head.

Headship is that opportunity to shape and influence.

To deliver the best.

Do the right thing for the kids.

Deliver a really strong vision that is child sensitive.

Lorraine's career narrative: "Amazing, not just OK"

I have fast tracked through my career.

Challenging schools. Inner city. Rapid turnover.

Opportunities became available quite quickly.

I was promoted to subject lead at the end of my NQT year.

That was pretty unheard of.

My father came from a very poor background.

He is very successful, determined, focused.

He directed me to work in more challenging schools.

He said *anybody* can go and work in an *easy* school.

But you're having an impact, making a difference.

It is a joy to teach.

The most satisfying part is seeing children being as successful as they can.

Sixth Form College. University. Transforming their lives.

When I became a mother I saw things from a different perspective.

I softened.

My door is always open.

People can come and speak to me.

But you're isolated.

You are the person that's ultimately responsible.

You've got to maintain the standards. Lead by example.

There are still things for me to learn.

I'd like to feel 100% secure that I could go into headship.

To be amazing, not just OK.

I will only do that when it feels right.

I need to know that I'm going to do a *really* good job.

Madeline's career narrative: "These are huge decisions"

I'm a typical Future Leader.

Leading from the heart.

Not letting the postcode influence the outcome.

Non-stop inspiration.

It's powerful to think you are influencing lives.

I dress each day as if I'm going for an interview.

I put *everything* into it.

I'm constantly battling with work – life balance.

I'm struggling to eat, keep the house in order.

The wear and tear. I'm burning out.

I need to make the decision whether to have children.

It's the fear of working when you're pregnant.

Can you keep up the pace?

Would you want to come back?

The job and family don't mix.

Headship is a maybe for many, many reasons.

I'm good at my job. I'd be stupid not to.

But the next step is a commitment for the rest of my life.

The ultimate responsibility. 24 hour call. The financial side of it.

These are huge decisions.

I've never been attracted to power.

I'm struggling to find a reason why I would.

But if you stay a deputy, they'd be like:

'Why doesn't she want to be a head?'

'Is she a crap deputy?' 'Is *she* crap?'

Naomi's career narrative: "It just happened"

My career was never planned.

It just happened.

I worked my way up.

All the way through.

I was a headteacher.

I had to be persuaded to do it.

I thought I'd hate it, but I enjoyed it.

Then the school closed.

It was the hardest thing I will ever have to do. Redundancies.

I don't know if my heart will ever belong to a school in the same way.

I don't have any children.

Neither do I have a good balance between home and school.

My life is my job.

The most satisfying part by a long chalk is seeing other people grow.

It's busy, it's never dull.

I'm a deputy in a bigger school than the one I was in.

City centre. The kids are quite tough.

I'd struggle to go into what I would call a *shiny* school.

A really high achieving middle class school.

I've only worked in schools that have been in trouble. A conscious decision.

Headship? I just don't know.

You are ultimately responsible.

Making things fit into a system that you don't agree with.

Continually working in the dark.

Budget. Buildings. Premises. I just don't know.

Sharon's career narrative: "Tarnished"

Went down a pastoral route very early.

Promotion after promotion.

I've always worked for females.

Very strong females.

My career has been very heavily female dominated.

I might be a deputy headteacher but -

I'm a mother, a sister, a daughter and a wife.

Everything else that goes with life.

I know so many female teachers who are in failed relationships.

I don't want that for myself.

I'm not a traditional mum. A Stepford Wife.

I've led career wise.

My husband worked from home.

He was able to take the kids to school.

He's very supportive. Tolerant of my work hours.

My female head went off long term ill.

A chance to try the headship role. Have a go.

The other deputy and I were given the opportunity to apply for the job.

I was a little uncertain. I chose not to.

He's the head now.

I'll tell you what's scary. It's the accountability these days.

It's my neck on the line. Egg on face.

I don't want to be asked to leave somewhere.

I don't want to have ill health, or turn into someone else.

The reasons for me wanting to be a head are tarnished with the negatives.

Sophie's career narrative: "A choice I make"

I had no intention of being a teacher.

I got my first promotion after two years.

My headteacher said: 'when you're a headteacher, you'll understand'.

That changed my thinking about me, my career, what I was capable of achieving.

I became a Future Leader.

We serve a disadvantaged catchment.

It's the kind of school I want to be at.

That's a choice I make.

I don't want to go into the independent sector.

It wouldn't be the same.

I devote a lot of time to my work.

There are sacrifices that have to happen.

I have to make sure that I have a measured approach.

Be somebody who's able to make quick decisions in a crisis.

Somebody who doesn't overreact. Shoot from the hip.

I definitely want to be a headteacher.

In a school that's similar to the kind of school I'm in now.

I know the community. I know the catchment. I know how it works.

I would have the control to make the decisions.

To effect change.

I don't think anybody would do it if you thought about the negatives.

It's a significant personal investment.

I'm aware that as a head you can lose your job.

It's a big risk.

There's a football manager element to this job.

Summary

This chapter has presented twelve poetic representations, one for each of the women I interviewed. While acknowledging the active role of the researcher in constructing poetic representations, I aimed to offer poetic snapshots of my participants' lived experiences, perceptions and sense making. The chapter that follows moves on to consider the findings and most important issues that arose from my in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve women deputy headteachers. It discusses and interprets the super-ordinate and subordinate themes that emerged from my IPA analysis.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Doing IPA ... constantly involves negotiating this relationship between convergence and divergence, commonality and individuality.

(Smith et al., 2009, p. 107)

Introduction

Having presented poetic representations of my participants' accounts in the previous chapter, I will now move on to analyse and discuss the findings of this study. The first half of this chapter is concerned with the three super-ordinate themes that emerged from the IPA analytic process: (1) managing constraint, (2) motivating forces and (3) perceptions of secondary headship and the future. These themes, along with their accompanying subordinate themes, are explored with the aim of providing the reader with a rich account of my participants' lived experiences and sense making. The second half of the chapter discusses the findings of this research project in the light of extant literature and theory concerned with agency, structure and reflexivity. Drawing on Archer's (2003; 2007; 2012) theory of reflexivity as a mediatory mechanism between structural forces and human agency, I propose three types of potential headteacher aspirant: the autonomous potential aspirant (a strategic and decisive leader), the meta-reflexive potential aspirant (a values-oriented professional) and the communicative potential aspirant (a person-centred educator).

Themes and analytic commentary

The findings of this study show how my participants' career trajectories in secondary education have been shaped by both structure and agency. Examination of the data, however, revealed a large degree of heterogeneity between participants; each individual woman described mediating and making sense of structural forces and her own agentic capacity to act in a different way. My IPA analysis of the twelve women deputy headteachers' accounts produced three super-ordinate themes. These themes were labelled as follows: (1) managing constraint, (2) motivating forces and (3) perceptions of secondary

headship and the future. A summary of these themes along with their accompanying subordinate themes can be found in Table 6.

Table 6: *Super-ordinate and subordinate themes*

Super-ordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Managing constraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negotiating professional and caring responsibilities ▪ Meeting the challenges of deputy headship ▪ Balancing work and well – being
Motivating forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Influential others and worthwhile learning opportunities ▪ Values and the desire for social justice
Perceptions of secondary headship and the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A poisoned chalice ▪ An opportunity for influence ▪ Making a decision

Each of the themes in the table above detail different aspects of the deputies' lived experiences and perceptions. Using illustrative quotations to highlight the convergences and divergences between my participants, each theme will now be explored in turn.

Super-ordinate theme 1: Managing constraint

The first super-ordinate theme, 'managing constraint', relates to the challenges and restrictions that my participants reported having to actively negotiate throughout their careers. The data clustered under this theme demonstrate how the professional and public spheres of the women's lives intersect and blur. This super-ordinate theme comprises of three subordinate themes: (1) negotiating professional and caring responsibilities, (2) meeting the challenges of deputy headship and (3) balancing work and well-being. It is to the first of these subordinate themes, 'negotiating professional and caring responsibilities', which this chapter now turns.

Negotiating professional and caring responsibilities

One of the ways in which my participants appeared to have made sense of their career history was to track its trajectory in relation to personal events and circumstances. There were seven mothers in my sample, and all seven spoke about having to consciously strike a balance between the multiple and competing responsibilities of motherhood, and an upward career path in education. The experience and negotiation of these demands, however, varied immensely between participants. Table 7 illustrates the various strategies employed by the mothers in the sample to achieve a sense of personal and professional balance.

Table 7: *Work-family arrangements*

Mother as primary caregiver	Sharing childcare responsibilities with partner	Father as primary caregiver
Faye Jennifer	Katherine Lorraine Sharon	Alice Caitlin

The oldest participants in my sample, Faye and Jennifer, recalled taking on the role of primary caregiver within the home. Indeed, the realities of caring for their children and fitting their careers around their responsibilities as parents were prominent features of their career narratives. In this sense, their accounts were in keeping with traditional discourses regarding women, family and career. Faye described her teaching career as entirely compatible with her role as a mother. She recalled:

I had my children quite young then the career path fitted in very nicely with them going to school and me being able to come home later ... It's a fantastic career for a woman and still is. That is my belief (Faye, page 2-3, line 36 - 42).

This extract illustrates Faye's perception that teaching is an ideal profession for a mother of school aged children. Faye highlights a sense of interdependence between the public and private realms within her comment. It suggests that the line between home and work is fluid and in flux. It seems notable however that in this excerpt infancy and the pre-school years of her children's lives are not

mentioned. This raises the question as to whether it was as easy for Faye to strike a balance between work and childcare responsibilities during these years.

Like Faye, Jennifer also reported assuming the primary caregiver role, and this having an influence on her career. She recalled that one of the reasons she embarked upon a career in teaching was because she perceived it to be a family-friendly career choice. She explained that after running her own business she “wanted something where I could be with my daughter more during the summer holidays” (Jennifer, page 1, line 15 – 16). Jennifer’s comments echo the findings of Raggal and Troman (2008) who found female career changers were attracted to teaching “because of its reputation as a ‘woman’s job’ (Steedman, 1985) that fits with family life” (p. 586). Yet, while Faye perceived teaching to be congruent with mothering, Jennifer recalled experiencing difficulties juggling the demands of both roles and identities. Within her interview, Jennifer vividly described an event which had motivated her to rethink the balance between the professional and personal facets of her life. She recalled:

When my daughter was four she drew a drawing of myself, my husband and her. This drawing had her with my husband standing in the background holding hands and I was sitting very clearly at a desk with a pen in my hand and sitting at a chair and that’s how she saw me because I was marking so much and preparing so much and doing so much ... So I went into the head and I said I’m really sorry but I have to resign. I showed him the picture and told him I had to resign. He said, no don’t resign, go part-time with the understanding that as your daughter gets older you come in more (Jennifer, page 1 – 2, line 20 – 35).

Two divergent and conflicting discourses emerge from this extract: occupational ideologies advocating linear and hierarchical career advancement, and traditional gender ideologies concerning women’s role in the family. Jennifer’s repetition of the phrase “so much” illustrates the ways in which she perceived her teaching responsibilities to be both all-encompassing and overwhelming. The demands of her work are juxtaposed with her role as a parent within this extract thus culminating in a strong sense of guilt, an emotive response echoed by the mothers and primary school headteachers in Bradbury and Gunter’s (2006)

study. The sudden realisation that she must “resign” was a potent memory for Jennifer. What is particularly interesting about the way she recalls this critical incident is the lack of agency she reports. It is the combined constraints of workload, childcare responsibilities and her employer’s wishes that motivated her to work part-time. Even her desire to resign is not realised. Notably, later on in her interview, Jennifer spoke candidly about her fears that she had left pursuing headship “so late” and remarked “my teaching career has been stifled somewhat by commitments” (page 2, line 35 - 36). This perception clearly differs from Faye’s beliefs about motherhood and teaching. This highlights the different ways in which women of a similar age range had experienced balancing a career in teaching with childcare responsibilities.

While Faye and Jennifer recalled being the primary caregiver for their children, Katherine, Sharon and Lorraine described balancing childcare responsibilities with their partners. These women tended to report that their partners’ occupations and flexible work patterns had enabled them to negotiate an effective balance between the responsibilities of work and home. Katherine, for instance, reflected that her husband’s move into the education sector had helped her to balance taking care of her daughter and being a deputy head. She recalled:

He moved into education as a non-teaching head of house ... so, that helped with the holidays and at one point, for quite a long period of time when my daughter was very little, we worked at the same school. It was absolutely crucial (Katherine, page 5, line 93 -97).

Similarly, Sharon described the flexibility that her husband had to work at home as an enabling factor. She stated:

It is because of the type of work my husband does, he worked from home for about 18 years of my professional career so he was able to take the kids to school, go and watch them do sports day and Christmas productions. Dad was always around pretty much (Sharon, page 6 - 7, line 119 - 124).

What is evident from both women’s narratives is the ways in which their partners’ and their own career trajectories intersect and inform one another. Furthermore,

Katherine, Sharon and Lorraine spoke about their husbands' careers as being underpinned by pragmatic as opposed to ideological concerns; there is little discussion of either partners' agency or the structural constraints acting on each family in their narratives, only what was considered best for their families.

While Jennifer and Faye described assuming primary responsibility for childcare and the other three mothers in the sample recalled balancing childcare responsibilities with their partners, Caitlin and Alice reported negotiating less traditional childcare arrangements with their partners. These arrangements were described by the women as being the result of highly personal and strategic decision-making. Caitlin, for instance, spoke about her husband's role as a stay-at-home parent in the following way:

We had to make a choice as a family about what was best for us ... that's the only way I'm able to do what I do. If I didn't do this, I might have a very different opinion if my husband and I both worked and both had careers. I think inevitably I would end up being the one that wouldn't go on to be a head. But the choices we've made as a family have enabled me to do what I do professionally (Caitlin, page 25, line 509 - 520).

Within this extract, Caitlin describes making an active and conscious decision about childcare responsibility "as a family". The repetition of the word "choice" is striking and implies that Caitlin perceived herself to be agentic and relatively free from the constraints of traditional gender ideologies when making decisions about childcare in her family. It is evident from Caitlin's account of her experiences that her husband's responsibilities as a stay-at-home parent have enabled her to aspire towards and pursue career advancement. It is notable however that she believes that if she were in a dual-working household she would have to sacrifice her career aspirations. This perhaps suggests a perception that the societal expectation of women to be carers is a constraining factor for many women in the workplace.

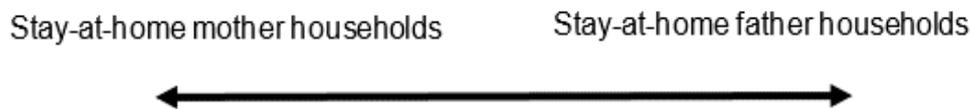
Overall, the accounts of the mothers in the sample illustrate the ways in which motherhood can shape and constrain women's personal and career trajectories,

a finding consistent with the work of Bradbury and Gunter (2006) and Smith (2016). The women's accounts also point to the varying degrees of freedom that individual mothers experience to negotiate solutions to the challenges of combining paid employment and child rearing. As mentioned in the literature review, there are existing typologies of women teachers' career strategies (see, for example, Evetts, 1994). These act to categorise the different approaches that women teachers and leaders have taken towards balancing paid work and caring within the home. These classifications however do not take into consideration the possibility of stay-at-home father households. Kramer et al. (2015) observe that this is a non-traditional and rarely studied work-family arrangement. Yet, according to the Pew Research Centre (2014), stay-at-home father households are becoming less rare. This could potentially illustrate a generational shift in attitudes concerned with childcare responsibilities and parenting. Congruous with this observation, two of the mothers in this study reported that their partners had assumed the primary caregiver role while they were engaged in full-time paid employment. Unfortunately, these women's lived experiences do not fit neatly into the career models explored in the literature review (see, for example, Coleman, 2002).

While analysing my data, I also found that some of the participants reported that their work-family arrangements had changed over time. For instance, their children had grown older (e.g. Faye, Jennifer), and their partners changed their careers (e.g. Katherine) or mode of working (e.g. Sharon). These changes in circumstance had meant that the balance between work and family life had also shifted. The fluctuating nature of these women's experiences mean that they too do not fit neatly into the career models explored in the literature review. In order to account for my participants' experiences, there is therefore a need for a model that takes into account the complexity and idiosyncratic circumstances of individuals. With this in mind, I believe that my participants' lived experiences of balancing a career in education with parenting would be better thought of as a continuum, with stay-at-home mother households at one end, stay-at-home father households at the other and varying 'balancing' strategies found in

between (including part-time working, shared responsibility and paid childcare). This continuum is illustrated in Figure 13.

Figure 13: *A continuum of work-family arrangements*



Opting for simplicity, I have chosen to avoid conceptualising my participants' work-home arrangements as a rigid typology in order to illustrate the multiple and varied ways in which parents actively negotiate work and family commitments. The continuum aims to allow for the possibility of both individual choices, constraints and circumstances as well as changes over time. This broad continuum, however, is not intended to obscure the “unquestioned and unspoken assumption that women will take primary responsibility for childcare” which persists in our society (Smith, 2016, p. 83). Indeed, there was an underlying sense among my participants that childcare is still a predominantly female activity.

Five of the sample were childfree yet, interestingly, three of these women spoke about the possibility that potential future caring responsibilities may inhibit their career development. Within the narratives of Madeline, Dawn and Beth, there was a palpable sense of anxiety concerning the perceived incompatibility of caring and senior leadership. These women actively questioned traditional gender ideologies and appeared to fear their repercussions. There was no sense within these narratives that, in the event of a change in personal circumstances, they could act agentially and negotiate an agreeable balance between the caring responsibilities they anticipated and the careers in which they were invested. Madeline, for instance, described feeling under pressure to make a decision whether or not to have children. She reported:

You've got the fear of working when pregnant. Can you keep up with the pace? Would you want to come back into the pace? It's very intensive and if I'm honest I think the reason that I am not choosing to go ahead with

family is because the job and the family don't mix and that's frightening (Madeline, page 4, line 78 - 83).

At the age of 35, Madeline believed that she should be thinking about having children. Yet, at the same time, she believed the demands of deputy headship would render motherhood unfeasible. Her conflicted thinking is illustrated in the questioning in the extract above. Interestingly, this dilemma ran through Madeline's career narrative and appeared to cause a large degree of anxiety about the future and the lack of self-determination it may bring.

The overwhelming majority of the women spoke about caregiving in relation to their current or potential responsibilities towards young children. Yet, as reported in the literature review, caring for ageing parents has also been cited as a responsibility that can affect women's working lives (Gautun and Hagen, 2010). Notably, Beth was the only participant to refer to obligations towards ageing parents. While talking about her headship aspirations, she remarked:

You get to my age, your parents are getting older and there's still that caring role that you're expected to do and if I moved away and became a headteacher I would have less time to care for them, even though I've got a younger brother he's not expected to take on as much of that caring side of things (Beth, page 24, line 492 - 498).

The direct comparison that Beth makes with her younger brother is interesting. It speaks to the gendered construction of caring in our society. The theme of expectation runs through this extract. Beth's feelings illustrate the ways in which gendered assumptions shape and constrain her professional choices; the expectation to care for her ageing parents is perceived to be influencing her geographical mobility and, in turn, her decision as to whether or not to aspire towards headship. It is interesting that there is no consideration in Beth's narrative of how things might be different, or how she might negotiate a more egalitarian caring arrangement with her brother. It seems that her potentially powerful position as the oldest sibling is perceived to be negated by her sex. Conceivably, Beth perceives the ideological image of women as carers to be so ingrained in the fabric of our society that it is impossible to question.

In summary, the subordinate theme ‘negotiating professional and caring responsibilities’ represents the individual’s ongoing and conscious negotiation between professional and personal duties. It reveals a great deal of diversity in the ways in which the individual women in this study perceived and managed their responsibilities to dependents and other family members. While some of the women reported feeling constrained by the (actual or potential) expectation to care, others described feeling free to choose and actively negotiate an effective balance between work and home.

Meeting the challenges of deputy headship

This study found that the deputy headteacher role is a contradictory, sometimes ambiguous position that inspires both a sense of agency and constraint in its incumbents. The subordinate theme entitled ‘meeting the challenges of deputy headship’ reflects the women’s lived experiences of actively striving to meet the often conflicting demands of the role. The deputies reported a variety of responsibilities. Table 8 illustrates the primary area(s) of school life for which participants stated they were accountable at the time of interview. Some of the women appear in more than one category perhaps illustrating the ‘greedy’ (Gronn, 2003) nature of the position.

Table 8: *Deputy headteacher responsibilities*

Teaching and Learning	Pastoral/ Inclusion	Staffing
Beth Caitlin Dawn Faye Jennifer Lorraine Madeline Naomi Sharon Sophie	Dawn Katherine Lorraine Sharon	Alice

Research conducted in the 1990s (see, for example, Harvey, 1994; Ribbins, 1997) concluded that deputies tend to perceive their role to be poorly demarcated. More recent scholars have also pointed to the ways in which

deputies' working lives "include many 'grey areas' – ill defined, inconsistent and at times incoherent responsibilities, roles and resources" (Marshall and Hooley, 2006, p. 7). However, the findings of the current study do not support these conclusions. The women I interviewed seemed to have a clear sense of the role they played in the leadership of their schools. They reported being aware of and having actively negotiated their unique and particular position in the schools in which they worked. There was, however, a sense among the interviewees that deputy headship required individuals to continually and consciously oscillate between strategic organisation and planning on the one hand, and having to react to the unpredictable nature of school life on the other. Jennifer, for instance, remarked that despite her formal job title and duties:

My responsibilities are ... whatever happens. It is completely reactive (Jennifer, page 14 – 15, line 292 – 294).

Within this extract, we gain a sense of Jennifer having to be in a continual state of readiness in order to actively negotiate the volatile aspects of her role. For some participants, the unpredictable nature of the deputy headteacher position and hence their inability to engage in as much strategic planning as their headteacher counterparts was a source of constraint and frustration. Alice, for example, described her current role in the following way:

Being a deputy is a very interesting role because you have a lot of power, but you have your hands tied quite often (Alice, page 13, line 263 - 265).

Alice's assertion paints a picture of a deputy headteacher who is unable to act as thoughtfully and deliberately as she would like. This extract, then, illustrates a gulf between Alice's actual and ideal modes of working.

Despite their various leadership responsibilities, my participants taught for an average across the sample of four hours a week. Many stated that teaching was one of the most enjoyable aspects of deputy headship. It is interesting to note that all of the women spoke about the importance of teaching as senior leaders. They believed that continuing to teach and retaining contact with the classroom helped to preserve a child-centred approach to their work and build credibility with their teaching colleagues. Being engaged in the practicalities of teaching appeared to be a significant part of their professional identities as deputy

headteachers. For instance, Dawn perceived her teaching abilities to be linked to her professional self-worth. She described her teaching practice in the following way:

It is a point of pride with me that I've got to be as good if not better than other people who would teach them. I do put pressure on myself (Dawn, page 18, line 362 - 365).

This extract exposes the sense of responsibility Dawn feels as a teacher, as well as the high expectations she has of herself as a professional. Her drive to be “as good if not better” than the other teachers in her school could also be linked to her position in the school hierarchy. There is a sense that as a deputy headteacher she is in a very visible position and therefore aware of being watched, or possibly judged, by others lower down the occupational echelons. She appears to feel the pressure to prove that she has earned her position as a senior leader. There is, then, perhaps an element of competition and sense of perfectionism within this extract. This potentially speaks not only to an internal drive to be a successful teacher, but also the external requirement that teachers are competitive and accountable in the current educational climate. Dawn’s use of the word “good” is interesting. It is clear from Dawn’s narrative as a whole that she has a very definite idea about what makes a “good” teacher, but viewing the word in this context makes me wonder to what extent her use of the word “good” is informed by Ofsted grade descriptors and their rather rigid delineation as to what makes a “good teacher”.

Research studies suggest that some women teachers perceive school leadership to be entirely removed from students and their learning (see, for example, Smith, 2015; Loder and Spillane, 2005). While my participants reported that one of the affordances of their current role was that it allowed for contact with the classroom, some described a stark tension between teaching and the more managerialist responsibilities attached to their role. Consequently, some of the women recalled not being able to prioritise their teaching practice in a way that they would like. Naomi’s account for instance was tinged with the difficulties of balancing teaching with the multiple and fluid leadership responsibilities assigned to her as a deputy headteacher. She stated:

There's always that in your mind that you've always got a dilemma, you know that [teaching's] not your first priority... because everything else is and then you beat yourself up because your lessons aren't as good as you'd want them to be (Naomi, page 6, line 120 - 124).

Naomi's declaration that teaching is not her "first priority" speaks to the 'greedy' nature of the leadership work she is engaged in and the ways in which the demands of her current post leave very little room to teach in a way that she would like. Like Dawn, Naomi spoke about the pressure she puts on herself to deliver "good" lessons. The idea that she "beats herself up" over this suggests that Naomi is highly critical of herself in the professional arena. There is, again, a sense of perfectionism here. The way she describes her experience of teaching as a deputy headteacher hints at a reflective professional who is actively trying to negotiate, but has not yet found, a balance between the varied and conflicting duties assigned to her as a senior leader. Interestingly, a similar tension is reported by Harris and colleagues (2003) who suggest that deputies can experience an intense pressure to fulfil both their teaching and leadership obligations. Overall, it seems that deputy headship can be experienced as a conflict between the worlds of teaching and leading. This study suggests that this is tension that individual deputies are required to actively negotiate for themselves.

Another aspect of their working lives that the women reported as requiring strategic thought and conscious negotiation was the construction of an 'acceptable' deputy headteacher identity. In all of my participants' narratives this was described as an ongoing process. In accordance with previous studies (see, for example, Marshall and Hooley, 2006), the women tended to perceive themselves as intermediaries between the teaching staff and the headteacher. The women suggested that this intermediary role required deliberate and mindful consideration as to how to position oneself. Some of the women spoke about the need they perceived as senior leaders to dissociate themselves from colleagues lower down the occupational hierarchy. Alice, for instance, reported:

Any member of staff, at some point, could be called into my office and I have to have a very difficult conversation with them. If I'm too pally pally

with them then you can't ... I suppose you do have to have that professional line. I think that's what it is, isn't it? If they go out for a drink at the end of term, I wouldn't go with them (Alice, page 9 - 10, line 179 - 189).

The nature of Alice's role and her responsibility for staffing is invoked here to justify her self-imposed remoteness from those she manages. Her repetition of the word "them" in this extract perhaps says something about the ways in which she has made sense of her role as a deputy headteacher. It implies that she perceives herself to be physically and emotionally distinct from the teachers she interviews, monitors and disciplines. Her reference to the social life of her school is interesting. Her language is agentic and emphasises choice; her assertion that she "wouldn't go" for a drink at the end of term implies she has the option of going if she so wishes, and that Alice's distance from her teacher colleagues has been consciously created, transmitted and preserved by her.

As well as maintaining a level of desired or undesired detachment from teacher colleagues, the women also spoke about their perceived need to be guarded in the workplace. This included being "careful who you trust" (Sharon, page 18, line 370) and what you reveal of yourself while at work. Sophie, for instance, spoke about the need she perceived to suppress her true feelings in school. Speaking about the powerful emotions that she had experienced at work, she stated:

I have to be much, much more careful, in terms of the weak moments. Those times when I do experience frustration. Or dissatisfaction. Or annoyance at anything that's not gone the way that I hoped it would do. I have to make sure that I have a much more measured approach to things all the time (Sophie, page 11, line 221 - 227).

This extract illustrates the ways in which Sophie has felt she has had to deliberately conceal the emotional dimensions of her professional life. Her perception that she needs to do this "all the time" perhaps implies that she feels somewhat constrained by her leadership role; it is potentially driving her to cultivate an emotionally neutral 'front'. Viewing this extract via the lens of Goffman's (1959) work on impression management, it could be argued that

Sophie has actively organised and positioned herself to present a particular impression to those working in her school. It seems that 'back stage' - i.e. away from the gaze of her superiors and subordinates - Sophie has determined that emotions such as frustration, dissatisfaction and annoyance are incongruent with what she considers to be an 'acceptable deputy headteacher identity'.

The effort that Sophie invests in managing her emotions at work is echoed in some of the women's talk about crafting and maintaining their professional appearance. Within her interview, Jennifer described her 'work wardrobe':

'I would never go in apart from in business dress ... I wear heels which I hate ... I do present the image. It is like an act. It is definitely a performance' (Jennifer, page 17 - 18, line 350 - 359).

The business-like nature of Jennifer's work attire was something she shared with other women in the sample. Madeline, for instance, described her professional clothing as "mega professional, I dress each day as if I am going for an interview" (Madeline, page 12, line 232 – 233), while Katherine observed that there is a "very strong dress code" in her school in which she is required to dress in "smart suits" (Katherine, page 11, line 222 – 225). These comments potentially speak to the managerial, entrepreneurial and somewhat corporate nature of some secondary schools in England (Higham and Earley, 2013). As well as reflecting the current educational landscape in England, the women's choice of clothing may also hint at a perceived need to present a formal image to staff, students, parents and other stakeholders. Jennifer's remark that this presentation is an "act" or "performance" speaks directly to Goffman's observation that the individual is a "harried fabricator of impressions involved in the all-too-human task of staging a performance" (1959, p. 244). In presenting oneself, Goffman argues, we utilise rehearsed 'scripts', make strategic use of our 'settings' and 'make up' our personal appearance. For the women I interviewed, the conscious fashioning and negotiation of a professional appearance helped them to model their leaderliness to both staff and students. Interestingly, Jennifer's narrative revealed that heels are an integral part of her professional "costume". High heels could be conceived as a stereotypical symbol of femininity. Their presence in Jennifer's work wardrobe suggests that she perhaps feels the need to perform both her

leaderliness *and* femininity in the workplace. Being a leader is a position stereotypically conflated with masculinity (Reay and Ball, 2000). Perhaps Jennifer perceives her role as a leader to be a potential threat to her femininity and, consequently, she uses the heels as an expression of her femaleness. It is notable however that she wears heels despite reporting she “hates” them. It is as if the public impression or mask she is attempting to manage and convey is valued more than any personal feelings of constraint or limitation she may experience. Jennifer, like many of the women in the sample, appeared to perceive a very sharp distinction between outward public appearance and inward private feeling. This was a gulf that all of the women described actively managing and negotiating throughout their career trajectories. At one point during her interview, Jennifer described the professional persona she believed needed to be adopted to be a successful deputy headteacher. She stated:

You are a swan, you have this calm exterior but your legs are flapping underneath (Jennifer, page 15, line 312 - 313).

This is a striking metaphor, and speaks to Jennifer’s perceived need to actively control her emotions and appearance while at school. Her “flapping” legs concealed beneath the water appear to suggest an element of panic or frantic behaviour. They imply strenuous activity and a sense of continually trying to stay on top of her workload and responsibilities. Her public façade however, the swan above the water, signifies elegance and serenity; this appears to be the impression that she wants others to have of her. The exterior, then, can be seen as a carefully and consciously crafted illusion that masks the hard work and anxiety beneath it.

To summarise, the subordinate theme ‘meeting the challenges of deputy headship’ speaks to the tasks and tensions that my participants associated with the deputy headteacher role. The women in this study spoke about deputy headship as a position that requires one to establish a balance between leadership and teaching, strategising and reacting. It was also described as a role that required an individual to consciously construct and manage a particular professional persona. Overall, it seems that deputy headship was perceived as

a position informed by both structural expectations, and individual human agency.

Balancing work and well-being

The third subordinate theme concerns participants' attempts to maintain a sense of physical, social and emotional well-being despite the demands of their working lives. The Department for Education's Teachers' Workload Diary Survey (2014) found that deputy headteachers reported working 19.1 hours a week 'out of hours' (i.e. before 8am, after 6pm and on weekends) (p.13). All of the women I interviewed described working numerous hours outside of the school day, and tended to perceive working at home to be a typical and inescapable part of their day-to-day professional lives. Some of the sample, however, believed that the amount of work needed to be completed 'out of hours' was excessive. Dawn, for instance, stated:

I started tracking my hours. When you are working 70, 80, 90 hours a week, it is ridiculous. There is an intense pressure (Dawn, page 5, line 91 - 93).

It is notable that Dawn aligns a long working week with the experience of "pressure" in her narrative. This suggests a perceived link between workload and the risk of work-related stress. Interestingly, one of the reasons that Dawn gave for perceiving her working hours to be "ridiculous" was that it stopped her thinking about the "bigger picture". She reported:

I think sometimes in the midst of trying to get all the work done, and trying to get everything ticked off my to do list every day, I forget the bigger picture - my career development (Dawn, page 7, line 134 - 138).

Here Dawn aligns excessive working with a lack of career planning and development. She appears to perceive an absence of time and space to reflect on one's future career trajectory to be a potential barrier to career advancement. A common thread throughout the women's career narratives was the ways in which their workload had increased and intensified as they had moved up the occupational ladder. Naomi, for instance, reported that her work-life balance had "changed with responsibility and that's inevitable, so the higher up the chain you go the less time you have at home" (Naomi, page 4, line 76 - 78). Within this

statement Naomi associates linear and vertical career advancement with a diminished private life. Her description of this as “inevitable” suggests that she perceives an increased workload to be an unavoidable consequence of being a senior leader. The idea that this is not questioned or critiqued within Naomi’s narrative suggests that she perceives this to be a commonplace phenomenon over which she has little control. The intensification of teachers’ and leaders’ work, including working ‘out of hours’, is said to be a defining feature of the current, performative educational landscape (Earley, 2013). In keeping with this observation, many of the women in my sample described their day-to-day working lives in ways that were reminiscent of Gronn’s (2003) description of ‘greedy work practices’ which can be found in the literature review of this thesis. Their accounts of their current work as deputy headteachers painted a picture of a role that was both intensive and all-consuming. Interestingly, Naomi linked the necessity to adopt ‘greedy’ work practices with her experience of being a woman. She reported feeling as if she had to work harder than her male colleagues to prove herself as an ‘acceptable’ leader. Recalling the milestones in her career to date, Naomi stated:

I don’t know if it’s worse for women that they feel that they have to prove themselves more than men do. That might be total nonsense but it’s just a little perception that I’ve got that I think women feel that they have to work harder to achieve the same (Naomi, page 21, line 422 - 426).

These feelings were echoed by Beth who recalled feeling as if she needed to work harder to “keep up” with her male deputy headteacher colleagues (Beth, page 6, line 123). Naomi’s assertion that she has had to “work harder to achieve the same” suggests that she perceives herself as having battled against the common and stereotypical conceptualisation that management is ‘masculine’ throughout her career.

Aelterman et al. (2007) define ‘teacher well-being’ as “the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand and the personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other hand” (p. 286). In spite of the positive emphasis of this definition, the majority of the literature on teacher well-being focuses on occupational stress, burnout and mental health issues

(Bricheno et al., 2009, p. 6). These subjects were referred to by all of my participants, and their exploration tended to be interwoven with talk about responsibilities and expectations. Many of the women in the sample perceived their assigned workloads to be a potential threat to their well-being. Madeline, for instance, was particularly concerned about the long term consequences of working at her current pace and an inability to psychologically 'detach' from work. She reported finding it difficult to find the time to relax after a busy week:

I struggle to switch off mentally ... It's always in the background. I don't sleep on a Sunday night (Madeline, page 19, line 383 - 386).

Within this extract, as well as Madeline's narrative as a whole, there is a sense of continual activity and busyness. Madeline reported that even when she is physically away from work she is unable to stop thinking about her professional life. It is interesting that, despite claiming that this cognitive and affective process is going on in the "background", Madeline noted that the demands of her occupation had bled into her world outside work and altered her sleeping patterns. Notably, there is no indication in her narrative as to how things could be different; Madeline reported feeling constrained by her workload rather than feeling agentic or in control to use her power and position to act otherwise.

A similar lived experience was described by Katherine who stated:

I will just find work to do. I always did. I'm not very good at relaxing. I genuinely don't know what to do. I had a day once where I didn't really have anything to do and I just watched a whole season of Grey's Anatomy and I just felt so guilty (Katherine, page 9, line 178 - 182).

Here Katherine aligns relaxation with self-reproach. It seems that as both a deputy headteacher and a mother she was used to being in a state of continual activity. The emotionality inherent within this extract is striking. She describes feeling guilty for doing something she enjoys. It is as if she perceives a lack of productivity to be wrong. Both Madeline and Katherine appear used to being consumed and colonised by their occupations, and therefore seem unable to escape a sense of obligation and responsibility attached to their work, even at home. While talking about the sheer number of expectations placed on her as a deputy headteacher, Sharon observed:

Mental health is a big thing with teachers, you know, that's a big worry for me. With teachers who go off with stress or anxiety or breakdown or, you know, and you hear more and more about that (Sharon, page 35 – 36, line 731 - 735).

This extract illustrates feelings of anxiety. Sharon perceives mental illness to be common among those in the teaching profession and hence perceives herself to be at risk. The pressure she feels to work effectively and balance her responsibilities appear to have resulted in apprehension, not only for herself but those teachers she is charged with leading. In a similar vein, the concepts of 'burnout' and sustainability littered Madeline's narrative. She frankly stated:

I'm 35 and I'm burning out ... It's constant, 12, 15 hours a day (Madeline, page 21, line 427 - 429).

This extract suggests that the boundless nature of her work is taking its toll. The juxtaposition of her age with the concept of 'burnout' which we may typically associate with a lack of energy, motivation and enthusiasm is telling. It potentially points to a lack of steady progression in her career to date. Within her career narrative, Madeline spoke about how her commute into work and the nature of her role were "directly affecting my ability to exercise, shop daft as it sounds so I will go weeks on end with hardly any food in the cupboards, it's an ongoing joke" (Madeline, page 4, line 68 - 70). She also stated "I don't think this job's sustainable now" (Madeline, page 20, line 407). Madeline's comments illustrate her difficulties in trying to balance her work and well-being, as well as the ways in which her concerns for her health are influencing her perceptions of her current role; she appears to believe herself to be constrained and limited by the workload attached to deputy headship. Interestingly, these concerns had resulted in Madeline considering an alternative career as an "IT sales person" or a "high level PA" (Madeline, page 20, line 405 - 406).

The majority of the data clustered under this subordinate theme suggests that the women felt constrained and somewhat controlled by the reality, workloads and responsibilities of deputy headship. Conceivably, the fears expressed by the women are symptomatic of a perceived lack of individual agency to negotiate an acceptable work-life balance. Interestingly, while feelings of constraint emerged

from the majority of the women's narratives, a minority of interviewees asserted that achieving a balance between one's professional and personal lives was something that individual deputy headteachers have the power to actively negotiate and control. It was argued that deputy headteachers are not necessarily 'victims of workload'. Perceiving herself to be agentic and therefore able to balance the constraints and affordances of her role, Lorraine stated:

Workload is something you constantly have to think about and something you have to monitor and you do that through your time management. I have specific cut off points where I think I've done enough now and now I need to have some 'me time' (Lorraine, page 5, line 100 – 104).

The sense of self-determination in this extract is striking. It speaks to the possibility of shaping one's own experiences of deputy headship despite the 'greedy' educational culture in which my participants work.

Overall, the subordinate theme 'balancing work and well-being' reflects the challenge of maintaining a sense of personal well-being, despite the various roles and responsibilities attached to deputy headship. The data suggests that many of my participants felt constrained and limited by both their individual workloads and an educational culture which requires increasing amounts of work output, productivity and commitment from its workforce. Some of the data did however suggest that, in such a climate, the onus is on the individual to actively pursue, monitor and maintain their own personalised sense of work-life balance.

Super-ordinate theme 2: Motivating forces

The second super-ordinate theme, 'motivating forces', focuses on the factors that were reported to have imbued my participants with a sense of agency, and inspired them to pursue advancement opportunities throughout their career trajectories. There are two constituent subordinate themes: (1) influential others and worthwhile learning opportunities, and (2) values and the desire for social justice. This chapter will now explore the first of these subordinate themes, 'influential others and worthwhile learning opportunities'.

Influential others and worthwhile learning opportunities

Throughout their interviews, many of the women identified colleagues who had been particularly influential during the formative years of their careers. Faye, for instance, recalled a female deputy headteacher that she had worked for as an NQT. She stated:

I just wanted to be like her. She was like the mother hen of the school, she looked after everybody and everything. She was just marvellous when I was a new young teacher and I just wanted to be like her (Faye, page 1, line 17 - 20).

It is clear from Faye's narrative that the example set by this deputy headteacher has stayed with her throughout her career. The woman's behaviour and the respect that others bestowed on her appeared to facilitate Faye's professional aspirations. Her repetition of the phrase "I wanted to be just like her" suggests that Faye spent time observing her deputy headteacher's behaviour, and taking cues as to how she should behave in the professional arena. Arguably, Faye's description of her role model is stereotypically gendered in nature: "she was like the mother hen of the school". Within this simile, Faye tells of this woman's caring, almost maternal nature. Faye's desire "to be like her" suggests that she perceived this role within her school's context to be desirable and, possibly, even powerful.

Most of the talk of influential others referred to those who were more advanced in their careers and held positions of both leadership and power. Lorraine, for instance, pointed to a female headteacher who had led her school during a particularly turbulent moment in its history:

It was when the school went into Special Measures quite at the beginning of my career. She was pulled out of retirement ...they couldn't recruit because it was such a challenging school. She came in, and to watch her transform a very demoralised staff team and be this inspirational figure head ... I watched how she gelled the team together. She transformed the education process. She ironed out the behaviour issues. She was just an amazing person really (Lorraine, page 3, line 44 - 56).

It is clear from the positive language that Lorraine uses to describe her former headteacher (i.e. "amazing", "inspirational") that she respected her. Although she

is described as being of retirement age, this headteacher's activity, agency and desire for change is emphasised within this extract. Described as somebody who "was very well thought of" (Lorraine, page 3, line 59), this woman was perceived by Lorraine as a role model whose opinions had changed the direction of her career trajectory. She stated:

I wanted to either do an EdD or a PhD and she said that wasn't the right direction for me ... I took her advice and never ended up doing it (Lorraine, page 3-4, line 60 - 72).

The encouragement and support of previous and current headteachers was referred to by all of my participants. This talk was not confined to female heads. Indeed, many of the women spoke about male headteachers who had supported and encouraged their career advancement. Jennifer, for instance, remarked:

He would say things like 'now you need to be doing this'. He used to put me in things like this collaborative group, which meant I worked with all the headteachers from the primary schools. He was gearing me towards headship, without me really knowing it. He was phenomenal, he was my mentor (Jennifer, page 12, line 244 - 248).

The opportunities that Jennifer's headteacher created for her are described in a way that suggests they were highly enabling. The idea that her headteacher was preparing her for headship without Jennifer "really knowing it" suggests this was happening gradually and in keeping with her professional development. Within this extract, we get a sense of the faith and trust Jennifer's headteacher placed in her to represent her school in the local community. The benefits of having an encouraging headteacher was also spoken about by the other women in the sample. Sharon, for instance, spoke favourably about the headteacher who first promoted her:

My second head was female, no children, very career driven ... a lot of respect for her. She was the person that gave me the promotion, if you like, and who nurtured me and was my role model when I first went in as an NQT (Sharon, page 4, line 64 - 68).

Sharon speaks very positively about the woman who 'gave' her a promotion. It is interesting however that there is no sense of agency in this statement, no sense

of earning the career advancement she experienced. A similar sentiment was expressed by Alice who referred to herself as “lucky” to have been promoted thus giving the impression that she was simply in the right place at the right time. Both women spoke in ways that suggested it was something other than their own agency and leadership potential that had prompted their early career advancement. A related idea is present in Katherine’s career narrative. She spoke about the faith that her headteacher placed in her when appointing her as an assistant headteacher. She recalled:

It was like a temporary assistant headteacher post, they weren’t substantive posts but he made myself and a colleague, who was head of Science, assistant heads. When he said it to me, I said ‘look, are you mad? I’m pregnant’ He was like I don’t see that in any way or form getting in the way ... I think he was the first person to say ‘I think you can do this’ (Katherine, page 4, line 63 - 71).

Being promoted while pregnant was perceived to be a key milestone in Katherine’s career narrative. She reported believing this to be *the* moment that she realised that she could be both a parent and a senior leader. It is notable that within this extract Katherine recalls saying “are you mad? I’m pregnant.” It suggests that prior to her promotion she held the belief that motherhood and senior leadership were incompatible. It was her headteacher and his faith in her that are reported to have changed that perception.

Overall, the data explored above points to the instrumental role that a supportive headteacher can play in one’s career trajectory. It was via their headteachers that the women in my sample were able to gain additional leadership experiences and/or the boost required to perceive themselves as potential aspirant leaders. In their study of the relationship between the headteacher and deputy headteacher in Welsh primary schools, Hughes and James (1999) found that a successful head-deputy relationship was based on a shared understanding of each other’s role and responsibilities, trust and respect, shared values and beliefs, and good communication as well as loyalty and support (p. 88 – 89). The importance of having a headteacher with whom they could have a good working relationship was highlighted by all of the deputies in my sample. Collectively, the

women's accounts appear to suggest that one's relationship with the head is capable of making or breaking both career experiences and professional aspirations.

Influential others in the women's career stories were not always situated above them in the occupational hierarchy. Jennifer and Katherine both spoke about the ways in which their career aspirations had been affirmed by the opinions of those that they had been tasked with leading. Jennifer remarked:

If people that have worked for you say you would be a great head that means more to me than a head saying you would be a great head ... That's the most encouraging thing. I think the people below you make you believe in yourself and the people above you enable you to do it (Jennifer, page 13 – 14, line 269 - 277).

Despite there being a clear sense of hierarchical and disparate power relations within this extract, Jennifer appears to value the opinions and perspectives of those she manages. There is a sense that those she has led encourage and augment her self-belief as a leader. The support of those 'below' was also referred by Katherine who stated:

You get to a point where it isn't people above you anymore ... It becomes people below you in the institution where they'll say 'I wish you were the head' or 'it would be different if you were doing this' (Katherine, page 4, line 71 - 75).

The recollection of others' comments about her leadership skills is a striking feature of this extract. The comments appear to focus on the gap between what is and what could be if Katherine were a headteacher. They also seem to position Katherine as a facilitator of change both at the individual and organisational level. The idea that Katherine has remembered their words well enough to recall them within her interview suggests that they are meaningful and have potentially helped her to make sense of herself as an aspirant headteacher.

Alongside influential others, many of the participants spoke about leadership programmes that had inspired and instilled within them a sense of agency to climb the next rung of the career ladder. Training opportunities were described

as having been key in helping them to construct their leadership identities as well as to equip them with a certain type of career capital. The NPQH was spoken about by five of the women in the sample. Two reported having recently finished the programme, and three reported being in the midst of applying for or completing the programme at the time of interview (see Table 9).

Table 9: *My participants and the NPQH*

Applying	Ongoing	Completed
Alice Caitlin	Katherine	Jennifer Lorraine

For many, the NPQH was described as a definite step towards headship and illustrative of an active willingness to be a headteacher. Caitlin, for instance, remarked:

I'm going to apply for my NPQH this year, just to start next September, and so doing things like that I think will definitely prepare me for headship (Caitlin, page 22, line 444 - 447).

This extract illustrates Caitlin's faith in the NPQH as a means of preparation for headship. The idea that she says "things like that" however suggests that she believes there to be other modes of headship socialisation aside from the NPQH that will equip her with the necessary skills and experiences.

Despite envisaging herself as a headteacher at some point in her professional future, Lorraine reported not feeling completely ready for the challenge of headship after completing her NPQH. She stated:

I thought I was ready for headship when I completed my NPQH and then taking up my current position I realised that I've got a lot to learn (Lorraine, page 18, line 359 - 361).

The gulf between expectation and reality in this extract is striking. There is a reported gap between what she thought she learnt while completing the NPQH and what she feels she ought to know to become a headteacher. Consequently, Lorraine expressed a longing to wait until "I know I'm going to do a really good job and have the confidence within my own ability to do that because I've experienced everything that I need to" (Lorraine, page 18, line 372 - 374).

Another leadership programme referred to in the women's narratives was the headteacher development programme 'Future Leaders'. As I explored in the literature review, Future Leaders is a leadership development programme for current or aspirant senior leaders. Out of the twelve women in my sample, two had completed the programme and therefore identified as 'Future Leaders'. Madeline was one of these women and remarked:

Everything they've done is directly tailor made to do the job I do and that's been amazing. They've got the network which gives you strength, you've got the inspiring speakers that keep you topped up. You've got a sense of responsibility for the time they've invested in you (Madeline, page 25, line 508 - 513).

Madeline's positivity and sense of commitment to the Future Leaders programme leaps out from this quotation. It is clear that she found her involvement in the programme to be both a worthwhile and enabling experience. It appears that she perceives herself to be morally and personally invested in The Future Leaders Trust and views the sociability it creates among its participants to be a significant strength. Likewise, Sophie, the other Future Leader in the sample, pointed to the advantages of the programme:

Things like Future Leaders have been invaluable ... having that network of people there that you can ring up and tap into their experiences ... they've all been there, they've been heads. So just having those people to bounce ideas off, and perhaps redirect some of my feelings after a particularly tricky period of time, is really useful (Sophie, page 22 - 23, line 448 - 465).

It is clear from both women's perceptions of the Future Leaders' programme that they felt that they had benefitted from and been inspired by the support and guidance of its network. I wonder whether this hinted at a sense of isolation or disconnect they might feel without it.

Despite the women's references to programmes and qualifications, there was some recognition among my participants that no amount of leadership development opportunities could ever fully prepare them for the headteacher

role, and that a great deal of their leadership training would occur during the first few months and years of headship. Despite this, all of the women reported perceiving their deputy headteacher position to be a good stepping stone towards secondary headship. This finding does not support previous research which suggests that deputies tend to feel that their experiences as deputy heads inadequately equipped them with the skills and knowledge needed to lead a secondary school (see, for example, Ribbins, 1997; Glanz, 1994). A possible explanation for this discrepancy may be that there are now training programmes such as the NPQH and Future Leaders designed for aspirant headteachers. This may mean that deputies are less reliant on in-school training as they once might have been, and feel able to take control of their own professional development. Another possible explanation for this focuses the range of experiences the women reported having had as deputy headteachers. Many of the women in my sample recalled having had both pastoral and curriculum responsibilities in the past and they tended to believe that this had given them an overarching view of school leadership. This variety of experience is a sharp contrast to the exclusively pastoral roles that women in senior leadership teams were stereotypically aligned with in the 1980s (McBurney and Hough, 1989).

In summary, the subordinate theme 'influential others and worthwhile learning opportunities' reflects the facilitating experiences and professional relationships which had motivated my participants to pursue career advancement. The colleagues, managers and learning opportunities identified by the women were reported to have had instilled within them a sense of agency to climb the next rung of the career ladder. In keeping with my earlier observations, these enabling factors were perceived, experienced and made sense of differently by each of the individuals in the sample.

Values and the desire for social justice

One of the most striking features of my participants' accounts was their commitment to their work and the motivation they experienced to improve their students' life chances. The data demonstrates that the women's values had been key drivers throughout their career trajectories; they had inspired the women to

move forward in their careers. Ball (2003) argues that in a performative educational culture teachers and leaders are required to set aside their principles and beliefs in order to organise themselves in accordance with evaluative measures. Yet, for the women I interviewed, 'value' had not replaced 'values' (Ball, 2003, p. 217). They were passionate about their work, values driven and keen to emphasise the satisfying elements of their role. Almost all of the women described their careers in ways that illustrated a strong connection between their work and core sense of self. For Madeline helping her students make progress was a highly satisfying experience. She stated:

Something special comes from most of them ...and it's powerful to think you've influenced their lives (Madeline, page 10, line 190 - 192).

It is evident from the way Madeline described her interactions with the young people she teaches that there is an emotional and altruistic dimension to her working life. She perceived her work to be "powerful" and capable of not only influencing pupils' academic outcomes, but their lives beyond the schools gates. Most of the women reported that the most satisfying element of their current lives as deputy headteachers was being in the classroom, and continuing to teach. They described taking a very child-centred approach to their role. Katherine, for instance, remarked:

If it comes down to students as themselves rather than targets and progress, it's me (Katherine, page 7, line 138 - 140).

This extract is interesting as it highlights Katherine's values, and perhaps a perception that the current educational landscape in England is too data driven and results oriented. Katherine aligned herself throughout her interview with a person-centred, empathic mode of leadership. The phrase "it's me" suggests that this approach is part of what Katherine perceives to be her professional identity or persona. A similar idea was expressed by Dawn who recalled asking the following question when deciding whether or not to implement a new initiative:

Is this in the best interests of the children, rather than just ticking a box for Ofsted? (Dawn, page 14, line 274 - 276).

Dawn spoke quite regularly in her narrative about the importance of an "inclusive school" and in doing so exposed a commitment to social justice. Similar child-centred values were echoed by Naomi, who spoke about the satisfaction she

derives from “seeing other people grow” (Naomi, page 6, line 107), and Beth who stated:

By far the most satisfying part of my job is being with the kids ... That’s just priceless. That’s the thing that I wanted to be a teacher for and that’s still the thing that I still get every day (Beth, page 9, line 172 - 181).

There is a clear sense of purpose within this extract. “Being with the kids” had motivated Beth to become a teacher and this was clearly perceived to be an enjoyable, “priceless” part of her current role. The idea that she described herself as having contact with her pupils “every day” suggests that Beth is far from detached from the school she helps to lead; she does not perceive herself as being isolated in an ivory tower of senior leadership. As well as working with young people, many of the women spoke about the satisfying role they play in helping their students to achieve their goals. Lorraine, for instance, remarked:

For me, the most satisfying part is seeing children being as successful as they possibly can, achieving the best that they can and go on to our sixth form college, university and to transform their lives (Lorraine, page 10, line 191 - 194).

Again, Lorraine is concerned with the whole person, and their lives which takes place both inside and outside of school. Within this extract, however, she advances a particular and potentially narrow definition of success. It is a definition that focuses on academic accomplishments and further education. This possibly exposes a belief that education is transformational and capable of facilitating social mobility. Within her narrative as a whole, Lorraine spoke about the duty she felt as a school leader to “make a difference” in low income communities. She spoke about being driven to exert a positive influence at the individual, school, community and societal level. In doing so, she made an argument for social justice, equality and social mobility.

These values were shared by the other women in the sample. This commonality was particularly evident when the women spoke about the types of schools and communities they have worked in. Madeline, for instance, spoke about her desire to make a wider social difference in her career. This was described as having driven her professional decision-making.

I need to pay back the community ... I'm very much about don't let the postcode influence the outcome (Madeline, page 25, line 514 - 519).

The use of the word "need" suggests that Madeline feels duty-bound to help the children within her care. She appeared motivated to tackle social inequality, and felt that the leadership responsibilities attached to her role as a deputy headteacher enabled her to do so. Beth reported a similar sense of obligation and drive. She described how her desire to "make a difference" had influenced the types of schools that she had chosen to work in both as a teacher and senior leader:

I have to work with disadvantaged, struggling kids in low income areas (Beth, page 4, line 81 - 82).

Both Madeline's and Beth's comments illustrate high levels of commitment and motivation. The women appeared to be driven by the work they do and perceived their profession to have a greater social purpose. It seems that their work not only brought some measure of satisfaction, but also inspired a sense of agency and the drive to continue. The women appeared to perceive themselves to be morally compelled to tackle social inequality, and this instilled in them a sense of vocation. The women's comments echo the findings of Harris and Chapman (2002) who suggest that leadership in a 'challenging' school is empathic and about "displaying people-centred qualities and skills" (p. 3).

Interestingly, while analysing the women's narratives I found that much of the language that the individuals in my sample were using to express their educational values was remarkably similar. For instance, the term "challenging schools" and the phrase "making a difference" appeared numerous times both within individual transcripts and across the sample as a whole. As opposed to values being side-lined or eradicated in a performative educational climate, then, it could be argued that the 'values vocabulary' used to express our professional principles in such a culture becomes rather standardised. This homogeneity is reflected in government policy documents. For instance, the white paper entitled 'Educational Excellence Everywhere' (DfE, 2016b) makes numerous references to "challenging schools" (11 times), the imperative to "improve outcomes" (5

times), achievement regardless of “background” (30 times) and teachers’ abilities to “transform” students’ lives (12 times). These phrases are very consistent with those used by my participants. This potentially suggests that central government are not only demarcating the policy climate in which the teaching profession works but also outlining the lexicon in which that work may be described.

To summarise, the subordinate theme ‘values and the desire for social justice’ reflects the ways in which my participants perceived their child-centred beliefs as having framed and shaped their career histories to date. Their principles were reported to have informed their career decision-making and the types of schools they had chosen to work in (both past and present). Yet, while the women had not compromised their values in the face of performative measures and that their deeply-held principles were described as catalysts for action, I questioned the extent to which the language my participants used to articulate their values and desire for social justice was entirely free from the political agendas and linguistic constraints of central government.

Super-ordinate theme 3: Perceptions of secondary headship and the future

The third super-ordinate theme, ‘perceptions of secondary headship and the future’, describes my participants’ professional aspirations and their view of their future professional selves. The data clustered under this theme suggests that the ways in which the women, as potential aspirants to headship, perceived the secondary headteacher role was largely dependent on whether they saw the position as constraining or enabling. Three subordinate themes emerged from participants’ accounts: (1) a poisoned chalice, (2) an opportunity for influence and (3) making a decision. The following section of this chapter will explore each one in turn.

A poisoned chalice

My study found that two-thirds of my sample (eight of the women) openly aspired towards secondary headship. Of the remaining third, one woman had rejected the possibility of headship while the other three were uncertain. Table 10 illustrates the spread of headteacher aspirants across the sample.

Table 10: *Headteacher aspirants*

Aspirants	Undecided	Non-Aspirants
Alice Beth Caitlin Dawn Katherine Jennifer Lorraine Sophie	Madeline Naomi Sharon	Faye

Faye (a non-aspirant) was the only one of my participants to talk about headship in a consistent and uniform manner throughout her narrative. She focused exclusively on her perceptions of the negative aspects of the secondary headteacher role. Conversely, the aspirants in the sample as well as those who were unsure about their professional futures appeared to hold dual, contradictory views of secondary headship: one perception consisted of a constraining role afflicted by risk, accountability and pressure, while the other focused on the agentic capacity headteachers have to transform the lives of young people. This subordinate theme focuses exclusively on the precarity and disincentives that the women saw as being rooted in secondary headship. Its label, ‘a poisoned chalice’, is inspired by the work of James and Whiting (1998a).

Congruent with the findings of Earley et al. (2012), the women perceived increased accountability measures and the pressures placed on headteachers during Ofsted inspections to be a significant disadvantage of secondary headship. In light of this, they tended to speak about the relative stability of deputy headship compared to the riskier reality of being a headteacher. Sophie, for instance, perceived headship to be more precarious than her current post as a deputy head. She remarked that headship is:

A big risk ... I'm well aware that as a head you can lose your job just like that if [Ofsted] come in and deem that the progress that your school is making is not good enough ... There's almost a football manager element to the job (Sophie, page 20, line 402 - 411).

This extract suggests that Sophie perceives Ofsted to be a threat to the stability and reputation of those holding headship posts. Her belief that she may lose her job “just like that” suggests that she fears the punitive action of Ofsted would be immediate and without warning. This extract also hints at the power that Sophie perceives Ofsted to have; they are believed to have the autonomy to label a headteacher as ‘inadequate’ or ‘requiring improvement’. Sophie’s assertion that there is a “football manager” quality to headship is a multifaceted and complex comment. It could refer to the public nature of the role; the ways in which headteachers’ results, like football managers, are widely available and subject to the gaze of all. The comparison could also imply that headteachers, like football managers, are exposed to scrutiny and judged by the outcomes of their work alone. Another potential meaning could centre on the lack of safety and time for complacency those holding these posts experience as they are quickly removed if judged to be incapable.

Like Sophie, Faye also described the power that Ofsted have to define and destroy teachers’ careers. This was one of the reasons Faye cited as to why she did not aspire towards headship. It was clear throughout Faye’s narrative that she perceived Ofsted inspections to be potentially destructive and emotionally damaging events. She described her most recent encounter with Ofsted as “like being ripped to pieces ... it was the most horrendous day of my career” (Faye, page 11, line 210 - 221). Faye’s sense of self appeared to be closely interwoven with her occupation and workplace. Given this connection, it seemed that she perceived the evaluative judgements of Ofsted to be a comment not only on her school and its effectiveness but also on her professional worth. The phrase “being ripped to pieces” suggests a damaging, brutal encounter which threatened her sense of self and well-being. One of the emotional repercussions of this experience was that Faye had started to fear for the future of the teaching profession:

I think there's a lot of the human side going out of teaching, and I think that's because everyone is under so much pressure under the cosh of Ofsted and all the target setting ... this percentage and that percentage (Faye, page 9, line 183 - 188).

Within this extract, Faye described feeling a sense of anxiety, loss and grief. She appeared concerned with what is being abandoned in the quest for a more accountable education system. Faye perceived change in educational policy and Ofsted inspection procedures as aggressively threatening values-based and empathic educational practice. Her fear for the future was reported to be another of the reasons why she had chosen not to pursue headship.

One of the most interesting findings concerned the women's impression that the educational culture in which they work is unstable and subject to continuous change. The unpredictable nature of policy climate in education was perceived to be littered with unexpected challenges and pressures for the new headteacher. Naomi, for instance, stated:

The rules keep changing ... continual working in the dark is something that puts me off headship (Naomi, page 8 - 17, line 159 - 354).

This extract suggests that Naomi was using her perceptions of the educational culture in which she was working to inform her professional aspirations. The phrase "working in the dark" suggests she felt highly uncertain in the policy climate in which she was working. Conceivably, current feelings of insecurity were not perceived to be a firm foundation on which to build professional aspirations and/or to consider pursuing promotion. One of the most interesting aspects of this quotation is Naomi's reference to 'rules'. Here she exposes a perception of the teaching profession as being governed or dictated by external decision makers. The idea that she is not the one making up the "rules" suggests she does not perceive herself to be agentic or free to work unobstructed.

Similarly, Sophie reported feeling discouraged and constrained by rapid and often unpredictable changes in educational policy. She stated:

The constant changing of the goalposts is really disheartening sometimes, just when you think you're making progress, and just when you think you're getting somewhere, and you're going to be able to embed something, it all changes (Sophie, page 8 – 9, line 165 - 169).

Sophie's comments illustrate her frustration with educational policies, requirements and targets that had proven to be temporary and uncertain. Despite being in a position of authority in the school in which she worked, Sophie appeared to feel controlled and determined by external governmental forces. She describes feeling unable to keep up with changes in educational policy and act autonomously. This suggests that she felt that excessive accountability measures were stifling her agency, autonomy and professionalism. Arguably, Sophie perceived herself to be lacking the agency to influence positive, localised change due to what is happening on the wider governmental stage. Her reference to 'goalposts' is similar to Naomi's reference to 'rules' and suggests a perception of teaching as an externally governed 'game'. This idea also suggests a perception of the educational landscape defined by outcomes, results and 'winners'.

Another frequently cited disincentive in my study concerned the financial and corporate aspects of the headteacher role. Consistent with Cranston's findings (2007), the women in this study believed that as headteachers they would be expected to be both educational leaders and explicitly managerialistic "akin to a CEO in the private sector" (p. 110). It is notable that the participants believed that being a head would be significantly dissimilar to their day-to-day lives as deputies and, as such, they felt ill-equipped to deal with the CEO-like duties of headship. Madeline, for instance, remarked that she was anxious about the:

Financial side of it, managing that budget, I can't manage my own personal budget, and then professionally you wonder whether you could do it, and I think you probably have to do it because otherwise you'd lose your job, but I know that puts a lot of people off as well (Madeline, page 24, line 483 - 487).

This extract conceivably suggests a lack of confidence and a tendency to question her own skills and abilities. The comparison between a small scale, private budget and a large school budget is interesting and, again, points to the interrelated and fluid nature of our public and private lives and skill sets. The perceived precarity of headship also features in this extract. Madeline expresses a fear that she would lose her job and the security attached if she were found to

be lacking the required abilities to be a successful, corporate headteacher. Her reservations about financial management were shared by Faye who stated:

I think really now it is a businessman's job almost, rather than a teacher's job (Faye, page 18, line 374 - 376).

Interestingly, those who were somewhat risk-tolerant and had decided to aspire towards and apply for headship regardless of the disincentives they perceived handled similar anxieties differently from those who were more risk averse and undecided. For instance, Katherine, who was applying for headships at the time of interview, perceived budgetary responsibility to be a potential concern. Yet, within her interview, she reported that she had actively combatted these anxieties by consulting her current headteacher. She recalled:

I've said to her that I need more experience on the finance side. She said no you don't, you just need a good financial director or a decent school business manager (Katherine, page 14, line 281 - 284).

There is a sense of agency within this quotation. The reader gets the sense of Katherine consciously negotiating the constraints she perceives in order to advance her career.

The participants tended to feel that headship was a very public role. While Jennifer reported finding that aspect of the role attractive, the majority felt that the position could leave them exposed to the potential of professional embarrassment should things go wrong. Sharon, for instance, warned that a one-off incident or a wrong decision as a headteacher "could ruin a lot of people, both professionally and personally ... ultimately it's my neck on the line" (Sharon, page 31, line 645 - 647). The phrase "it's my neck on the line" suggests that Sharon perceives headship to be a highly risky endeavour. This risk is clearly anxiety inducing in that she perceives headship as having the capacity to 'ruin' her. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies. James and Whiting (1998a), for instance, found that many of the deputy headteacher respondents in their study harboured self-doubt and were "apprehensive of failure and the public disclosure of mistakes" (p. 13). There are two possible explanations for the fear of failure detected in my study. One explanation concerns a potential lack of self-efficacy and/or self-esteem. Indeed, gender differences in confidence, both its

outward performance and its ability to prompt women to pursue career advancement, have been explored by a number of researchers who have suggested that men tend to feel more confident in their professional abilities than women (see, for example, Coleman, 2002; McLay and Brown, 2001; Thornton and Bricheno, 2009). Another possible explanation is that some of the women had gained a rather bleak understanding of the headteacher role by working alongside existing headteachers. Sharon, for instance, recalled “I've worked for a head teacher who's been asked to leave her school because of Ofsted, I've worked for a head teacher who's left teaching and headship because of ill health” (Sharon, page 31 – 32, line 646 - 649). In light of these experiences, doubts and reservations in relation to secondary headship may appear to be prudent.

To summarise, the subordinate theme ‘a poisoned chalice’ reflects my participants’ reservations about secondary headship. All of the women I interviewed spoke about the prospect of being a headteacher in ways which could be considered at best limiting and constraining, and at worst risky and potentially damaging to the individual. Their narratives paint a picture of the secondary headteacher role as highly precarious, especially in a rapidly changing and therefore unpredictable educational climate.

An opportunity for influence

The other image of headship that emerged from this study focused on the freedom that headteachers have to act agentially and bring about positive change. Research suggests that existing headteachers speak very positively about their role (Lacey, 2004; MacBeath et al., 2009). The findings of this study suggest that most deputy headteachers also perceive the positive aspects of secondary headship. Eleven out of the twelve women I interviewed spoke about the affordances of the position alongside the disincentives. Jennifer, for instance, described her hopes for her professional future in the following way:

I would love to think that I could go to a school and make a difference. To make a difference to the whole school (Jennifer, page 21, line 432 - 434).

Within this extract there is a desire to transform an institution. Her vision is holistic, and she is clearly motivated to accomplish something worthwhile as a

headteacher. These sentiments were echoed by Caitlin, who had the following to say about her headship aspirations:

I just think it'd be the best job in the world really ... being in charge and having a vision of changing a thousand plus children's lives, and saying what you think would be great for them, and having that impact on all of their lives and your local community. I just think that would be an amazing thing to be able to do (Caitlin, page 17, line 346 - 354).

Interestingly, a number of women expressed a desire to lead a 'challenging' or 'failing' school. For some of the sample, the aspiration to lead this type of school was based solely on their career histories and the types of school they were familiar with. Sophie, for instance, remarked:

I would like to be in a school that's probably similar to the kind of school that I'm in now, partly because I know how it works, I know the kind of things that we all need to do, I know the community, I know the catchment, I know how to manage that (Sophie, page 18, line 367 - 371).

This extract appears to highlight the ways in which Sophie's headship aspirations are contingent both upon her lived experiences and school type. She had a very clear preference for schools considered to be in 'challenging' circumstances. Her repetition of the phrase "I know" within this extract signifies how important it is for Sophie to feel at ease with the type of school she ends up leading. One of the most interesting things about this extract is the way it suggests that Sophie is looking out past the school gates when contemplating her professional future. This appears to hint at a belief that schools do not operate in a vacuum, and are therefore highly influenced by the community in which they are situated. The women who aspired towards headship were unanimous in their desire to lead a school that "needs a bit of help" (Jennifer, page 25, line 512). In many instances, this decision was reported as being made according to their desire for social justice and to have a positive impact on students' life chances. While analysing the data however I wondered to what extent their desire to lead a 'challenging school' was founded upon a perceived necessity to 'prove' impact, to add value and consequently gain a reputation as a headteacher who is capable of school transformation in 'difficult circumstances'. This thinking seems congruent with Jennifer's reported longing for "status" (page 13, line 254) and Lorraine's

assertion that she would not move on to headship until she was in a position to do the “job really, really well” (page 15, line 306). Perhaps this suggests that for these women career success was more important than altruism and social justice.

The women often used Ofsted descriptors to describe the type of school they would like to lead. Indeed, the language of Ofsted (e.g. ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘special measures’) appeared relatively frequently throughout all of the women’s narratives. These descriptors seem to be used in a way that signifies particular types of schools and teaching practices. They were clearly part of the lexicon of the deputy headteachers I interviewed, and therefore held very specific meanings for my participants. Beth’s use of ‘Ofsted speak’ in the extract below is interesting:

If I was going to do it, it would be a very similar school to this, I wouldn’t want to go to a good or outstanding school in a leafy suburb, I think I’d get very bored ... here the children are learning to survive and make the most of your life (Beth, page 21, line 427 - 436).

Here Beth is rejecting the hierarchical nature of these descriptors and aligning those terms typically associated with ‘successful’ schools (i.e. ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’) with a ‘boring’ suburban leadership experience. Beth appears to opt for the antithesis of this – an urban, exciting and challenging school environment – and wants to use her first headship as a means of making a social difference. Her perception that children learn to ‘survive’ in schools with less favourable Ofsted inspection reports highlights Beth’s sense of purpose and her belief in the power of school leadership to affect the whole child and their life trajectory. Leithwood et al. (2006) claim that “school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning” (p. 4). Indeed, many of the women spoke about the importance of headship and the impact that high-quality leadership can have on a school, its students and staff. Far from seeing the head’s role as detached from students and their learning, eleven out of the twelve women interviewed perceived headship to be an opportunity to shape and influence the educational prospects of disadvantaged students on a larger scale.

The women in my sample tended to perceive secondary headship to be a chance to make more meaningful decisions and experience the freedom to work in a more strategic manner than is possible at the deputy headteacher level. Many of the women perceived a desire for increased decision-making power as motivating them to aspire towards and apply for headship. The eight women who aspired towards headship perceived the secondary headteacher role as offering enhanced opportunities for influence. Lorraine, for instance, reflected:

I think when you are a head ... at the end of the day you have autonomy over what is done and the decisions that are made (Lorraine, page 15, line 311 - 313).

Similarly, Beth stated:

I think it's about having that little bit of extra control. Now at the moment myself and my headteacher will discuss things and I'll say, "You know I'm completely with you on that, I don't agree with it but I'll stand by your decision." There are little things that I think we could do that would make life a lot better for staff and students but I can't do them at the moment because I'm not the headteacher who's ultimately making those decisions (Beth, page 22, line 446 - 454).

Within both comments there is a desire for more freedom and opportunities to take decisive action. Beth's observation is interesting in that it speaks to a potentially constraining requirement she currently feels to support and agree with her headteacher, despite her personal opinions. Conceivably, her divergent perceptions had contributed to Beth's headship aspirations and desire to move on. Notably, this extract exposes a great deal of faith in her convictions: Beth believes she can make life better for her colleagues and students. It seems that confidence in her leadership abilities, leadership identity and her capacity to add value in a whole school setting is driving Beth forward.

Alongside increased decision-making power, the aspirants in the sample stated that headship would give them more opportunities to act strategically and realise their own visions of school life. Katherine, for instance, reported feeling:

I don't want that to be my core purpose, to be sorting out naughty kids, I want to lead, I want to be strategic, I want to improve what's going on ... I think it's that opportunity to shape and influence the diet the children get and the relationships within the school to make sure you are delivering the best for everybody (Katherine, page 16 - 18, line 328 - 370).

Within Katherine's account of her professional aspirations there is a desire for more holistic control. She appears to perceive deputy headship and its specific responsibilities as limited. Her wanting to identify whole school aims again suggests a confidence that she can facilitate improvement. Like Beth, Katherine displays a certain self-belief in her ability to lead within this extract.

Questioning the decisions of those higher up the occupational hierarchy had prompted some of the sample to pursue headship. Sophie, for instance, described looking "at how things could be done differently" (page 19, line 391) in her school, while Jennifer reported having a desire in meetings with her headteacher to say "I see what you're saying, but actually I think this" (page 22, line 460 - 461). The women aspirants in my sample appeared to want the experience of having one less person to reject their ideas. Overall, the desire for more autonomy and decision-making power was perceived to be a driving force moving them on to what they perceived to be the next 'logical' stage in careers they tended to describe as linear and hierarchical.

Looking at the data clustered under this subordinate theme alongside the previous one, 'a poisoned chalice', it seems that the majority of the women in this study were experiencing an emotional 'dissonance' between their desire to make a difference and the pressures that being a head would place on them in a performative educational culture. This finding is consistent with those of Blackmore (2004). While reflecting on their careers to date the women were attempting to mediate between the disincentives and affordances of secondary headship in order to make sense of the role. Conceivably, the presence of dual, opposing images of secondary headship in this study exposes the idiosyncratic and contradictory nature of individuals' career narratives and sense-making

processes. This finding appears to suggest that our lived experiences and perceptions in the professional realm are multiple, complex and in flux.

Interestingly, their belief in the power of educational leadership had inspired the eight aspirants in the sample to overcome their reservations concerning secondary headship and pursue promotion regardless of the disincentives they perceived. Sophie, for example, commented “I try and focus on the positive, because I don't think anybody would want to do it if you really thought about the negative [aspects of headship]” (Sophie, page 20, line 399 - 402). Like the other seven women in the sample who openly aspired towards headship, Sophie's faith in the capacity headteachers have to make a transformational difference to the well-being of individuals, schools and communities appeared to exert a greater influence on her professional aspirations than her anxieties and self-doubts. This study confirms other research findings concerned with women teachers' career aspirations. As was mentioned in the literature review, research suggests that those entering the teaching profession often perceive teaching to be 'socially worthwhile' and congruous with their aspirations to 'make a difference' to the lives of children and young people (Heinz, 2015). Similar altruistic motivations have also been cited as inspiring women to take on the challenge of secondary headship (see, for example, Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Lacey, 2004). It seems that in my study the pursuit of social justice and a belief in the potential power of headship to translate compassion and values into action had inspired some of the women who perceive headship to be a risky endeavour to climb the next rung of the occupational ladder regardless.

In summary, the subordinate theme 'an opportunity for influence' reflects the affordances that my participants perceived as being ingrained within the secondary headteacher role. The data reveals that, even though the women were highly aware of the potential disincentives of the position, two-thirds of the sample exhibited such a belief in the agentic power of headship that it overrode the precarity they perceived. These women agentially aspired towards headship regardless of the risks they associated with being a headteacher. This potentially suggests that risk taking is a part of agentic educational leadership.

Making a decision

This final subordinate theme is concerned with the affective and cognitive dimensions of looking forward to one's professional future. Like most of the subordinate themes that emerged from the interviews, it is possible to detect both feelings of constraint and agentic action in the women's talk about their career decision-making. On the one hand, the participants highlighted various factors that may limit their professional futures. These tended to expose layers of self-doubt and anxiety. On the other hand, the women described actively strategising in order to forge a future career trajectory for themselves. They reported using their past experiences, perceptions and resources to make an informed and logical decision as to whether or not to climb the next rung of the career ladder. Women deputies' impressions of their future selves, then, are shown to be based on considerations of both structure and agency.

Existing studies point to the part that emotions play both in career decision-making in education (Bolton and English, 2010) and in educational leadership more generally (see, for example, Cliffe, 2011). The majority of the women's narratives were littered with anxieties about their professional future. Some of the sample attributed feelings of uncertainty to a lack of confidence in the professional arena. Sharon, who reported to be largely uncertain about headship, directly referred to her perceived lack of confidence and the way that she felt this had influenced her career decision-making:

As women we spend too long with that self-doubt ...so that's something I've either got to grow out of or just that's part of who I am now at 42 and that might always prevent me having the courage and confidence to go, 'yeah I am the head and this is how it's going to be' (Sharon, page 28 - 29, line 583 - 588).

Within this extract, Sharon associates her perceived lack of self-confidence with her sex. She describes feeling that this may restrict or prevent her aspiring towards and applying for secondary headship. It is evident from the extract above that Sharon associates headship with bravery and self-belief. These are qualities she appears to align with masculinity. Similar gendered assumptions were also found in Jennifer's career narrative. She felt that the over-representation of men

in secondary headship was a direct result of women's lack of confidence. This was an issue that she perceived as limiting and constraining all women in the professional arena. She remarked:

There seems to be lots of males in the job who believe in themselves, but females don't seem to believe in themselves – they need that affirmation (Jennifer, page 31, line 630 - 632).

Self-belief is again described here as a male trait. It is interesting that both women and men are homogeneously grouped together in this extract, and there is no recognition of individual differences within gender categories. Jennifer argues that all women need collegial, encouraging and collective working environments to succeed. Given that she perceives men to dominate headship positions as a result of their assumed higher levels of self-belief, it seems that Jennifer believes that headship affords less opportunities for "affirmation" than other roles in the school context.

As I explored in the literature review, intersectional feminist theory posits that subjectivity is made up of different and interrelated threads of social identity including age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Carbado et al., 2013). It is an argument against essentialist thought that classifies men and women as homogeneous groups. The findings of this study suggest that some of the women's professional aspirations and thoughts about the future were influenced both by their age and the threat of ageism. For instance, the narratives of Faye and Jennifer are plagued with concerns about being 'too old', and the women appeared to fear the constraining impact that their ages may have on their future working lives. When I asked Jennifer what sort of school she envisaged herself leading, she replied in the following way:

Because I've left it so late, which is something I kick myself for, it won't be easy ... I don't know actually (Jennifer, page 24, line 492 - 494).

Here Jennifer exposes an internal sense of anxiety and uncertainty. It is almost as if she cannot envisage the future because she fears she has left promotion too late. Similar age related concerns were expressed by Faye. Yet, rather than being self-induced, Faye's anxieties appeared to centre on the response of others to her age. She described being "pushed aside" (Faye, page 9, line 179)

and demoted by her headteacher despite her professional experience and competence. Within her narrative, she attributed this to her headteacher not wanting a deputy “who is old or in the twilight of their career” (Faye, page 7, line 130 - 131). She recalled that her headteacher’s response to her identities (i.e. her sex and age) were entirely negative. She described fearing for both her own professional future and that of the teaching profession more generally as she anticipated she would have to battle against an educational culture that she described as “ageist” (page 7, line 128). These findings are in agreement with those of Coleman (2011) which suggest that women leaders tend to feel “disadvantaged by age more than men” (p. 34). Overall, it seems that for both Jennifer and Faye their ages were directly linked with the unknowable and possibly limited nature of their professional futures. Interestingly, there was no evidence in this study of any other strands of social identity intersecting with the women’s sex. Nevertheless, the experiences reported in relation to age suggests that the women deputy headteachers in this sample were not a homogeneous group and that consideration of other facets of the deputies’ identities aside from their gender is necessary both in this and future projects concerned with women teachers’ careers.

Fear of stagnation was also cited as an issue that rendered some of the women’s professional futures indefinite. Madeline, for instance, was very uncertain about what the future may hold for her. While she perceived there to be risks associated with secondary headship, she also felt there were dangers associated with becoming a ‘career deputy’. She expressed worries that she may stagnate as a deputy headteacher, and this may damage her professional reputation:

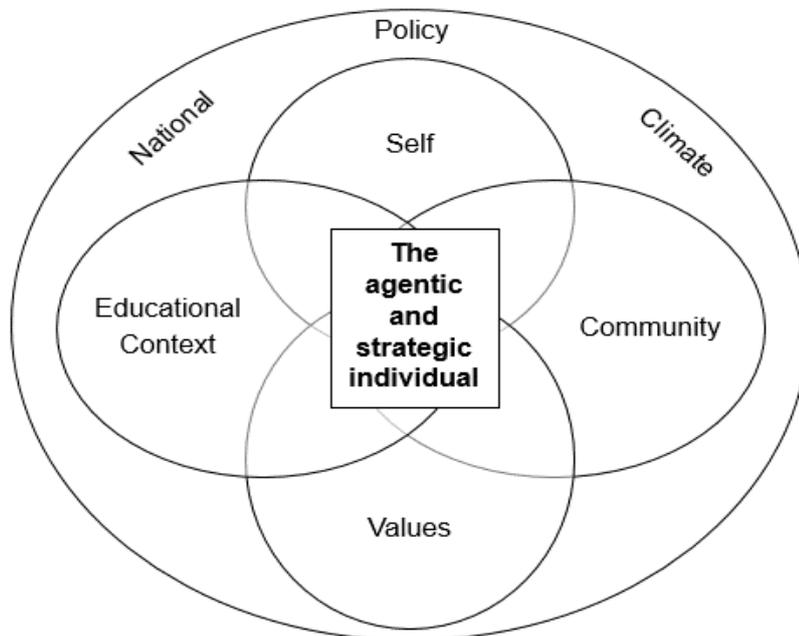
I’d be applying for my third deputy head post and ... that’ll be suspicious because they’ll be thinking ‘Why does she not want to be head? Is she a crap deputy head?’ ... This academy wouldn’t want me to plod on for 10, 12 years because it’s not healthy. Turnaround is healthy, and most deputy heads go into headship (Madeline, page 19 - 20, line 392 - 403).

It seems that in many ways Madeline’s uncertainty about her professional future had caused a kind of paralysis; she didn’t know which way to turn, and was consumed by large questions concerning her possible future self. Within this

extract, Madeline is constrained by others' impressions of her career decision-making i.e. what others expect from her and what is considered "healthy" in career terms. Her use of the word "plod" is interesting here and suggests there is something undesirable about stability and continuity in the culture in which she works. This is despite the potential advantages of senior, experienced staff remaining in post for sustained periods of time. Madeline's impression that "most deputy heads go into headship" coupled with her uncertainty gives the impression that she considers herself to be atypical and alone in doubting the next step in her career. Perhaps career anxieties and fears about one's professional future are not openly talked about in the educational workplace.

Alongside talk of the potential constraints they may encounter in their professional futures, the women also spoke of their agentic capacity to make logical and informed decisions about their future career trajectories. They spoke about having to consciously negotiate the constraints and affordances of the career options open to them thus highlighting their ability to exercise agency and choice. The women's narratives suggest that their decision-making was largely determined by (1) their self-perceptions and life projects, (2) the advice and expertise of their personal and professional communities, (3) their observations of and relationship with the policy climate in education and (4) their values and beliefs. These considerations appeared to be both distinct and interrelated in the interview data. They highlight the complexity and multiple concerns involved in making an active decision about one's professional future. Figure 14 illustrates the interrelated factors that my participants felt needed to be considered when making a decision about their professional futures. These four factors are shown to be situated within the national policy climate. At the heart of this diagram lies the agentic individual who is tasked with reflecting on the different facets of their professional and personal lives before making a decision. Below this diagram is a brief exploration of each of these four factors.

Figure 14: *The factors involved in my participants' career decision-making*



Firstly, this study found that participants' career decision-making was affected by the ways in which they saw themselves and their life projects. All of the women reported being actively engaged in assessing the potential next step in their careers (i.e. secondary headship) in relation to who they are and where they wanted to be. It was possible to perceive the women in my sample as being in active pursuit of a form of professional self-realisation, and that this endeavour was guiding their decision-making. There were numerous references to "fit" in the data; all of the women appeared to question within their interviews the extent to which headship was congruent with their fundamental sense of self. Lorraine, for instance, remarked that she would only pursue headship "when that feels right and it's the right position for me in which ever school that happens to be" (Lorraine, page 14 - 15, line 293 - 295).

Secondly, the women's accounts suggested that their career decision-making was informed to varying degrees by the advice and support of their personal and professional communities. This finding is in keeping with my earlier observations concerning the women's relationships with 'influential others' (see subordinate theme 'influential others and worthwhile learning opportunities'). Indeed, there was a sense among some interviewees that they discussed their career moves

and dilemmas with others in order to make sense of them. Confidants from the women's wider professional networks and/or their private lives were cited as being both sounding boards and sources of guidance. The example below comes from Sharon's narrative who reported discussing whether or not to apply for the headship at her current school with her family:

I had a great chat with my husband and my family, and I chose not to apply (Sharon, page 10, line 202 - 203).

It seems that via the acts of talking, reflecting and consulting Sharon was able to make sense of the decision she had to make, and move forward in an agentic manner.

Thirdly, the data revealed that the educational context in which the women were working exerted an influence on the women's career decision-making. As I reported under the subordinate theme 'a poisoned chalice', the women's perceptions of the educational landscape influenced their impressions of secondary headship, and in turn the ways in which they envisaged their future professional selves. Some of the women in this study felt that their person-centred values were being threatened by rapid educational change. They spoke about accountability measures, externally imposed expectations and policy changes that they perceived as compromising the nature of the work they do. My analysis revealed that these participants were drawing on their perceptions of the educational landscape when picturing their future professional selves and career trajectories. Caitlin, for instance, stated:

I've got a mortgage to pay; I don't want to walk into school one day and not have a job anymore. It's not a very nice climate (Caitlin, page 21, line 437 – 440).

Finally, it was found that the women's career decision-making was affected by their values and attitudes towards young people in our society. Throughout their narratives, my participants appeared to be actively assessing the extent to which the next rung of the career ladder was congruent with their beliefs about education. As I identified earlier, there is a wealth of 'values talk' in all of the women's accounts, including the following comment from Naomi:

I think you have to stick to your values and work out what matters in education and be prepared to not compromise on that (Naomi, page 20 – 21, line 418 - 420).

To summarise, the subordinate theme ‘making a decision’ reflects the women’s career decision-making. The meeting of structure and agency, affection and cognition, was found to be embedded within this process. The data demonstrated that, to varying degrees, all of the women in the sample referred to both (a) the anxiety inducing possibility that their future career trajectories may be limited or constrained in some way, and (b) their agentic capacity to make a strategic decision regarding their future professional selves. This finding appears to highlight the multiple layers of my participants’ career decision-making.

Summary of main findings

The super-ordinate themes that emerged from this study (i.e. ‘managing constraint’, ‘motivating forces’ and ‘perceptions of secondary headship and the future’) illustrate the agentic actions and constraining encounters that have defined twelve women deputy headteachers’ careers in secondary education. They paint a complex and multifaceted picture of my participants’ lived experiences. The themes reflect a group of agentic individuals who have consciously made their own unique way through their careers by carefully negotiating the constraints and affordances of their professional and personal lives. Organised in accordance with my original research questions, the main findings of this study are summarised below.

How do women deputy headteachers make sense of their career histories?

Congruous with previous research (see, for example, Coleman, 2002; Hall, 1996; McLay, 2008), the women in this study reported encountering both limiting and facilitating influences on their career journeys to date. For instance, family obligations, workload, and the educational climate in England were perceived to have been key obstacles to career advancement, while inspirational others, professional development opportunities and the drive to ‘make a difference’ were identified as motivating the group to pursue senior leadership. Yet, far from being

passive victims of circumstance, the women perceived themselves to be autonomous decision makers who had actively made their way through the 'labyrinth' (Eagly and Carli, 2007) of their careers. In this study, then, it was not necessarily the constraints and enablements themselves that were of note, but rather the individuals' unique perception and active negotiation of these factors.

How do women deputy headteachers experience deputy headship?

The contradictions and tensions of deputy headship emerged from this study. The women reported having to consciously negotiate the often conflicting demands of teaching and leading, dealing with the unpredictable and acting strategically as well as being accountable but not entirely autonomous. Yet, despite the conflicts found to be ingrained within the position, the women spoke about deputy headship in a way that suggested it was much more distinct and defined than previous research has indicated (see, for example, Harvey, 1994; Ribbins, 1997; Marshall and Hooley, 2006). The women seemed to have a clear role in the leadership of their schools. Alongside reflections on the role itself, the women also recalled the type of 'identity work' they felt that they had needed to do while making the transition to deputy headship. They reported having to intentionally craft a professional, embodied persona so as to be viewed as acceptable intermediaries between the headteacher and the staff and student populations. By consciously engaging in impression management (Goffman, 1959), the women had sought to cultivate a certain leaderliness and hence legitimacy in the professional arena.

How do women deputy headteachers perceive secondary headship?

This study found that the vast majority of the sample held dual, contradictory images of secondary headship: one image consisted of a constraining and highly precarious role, while the other focused on the agentic capacity headteachers have to transform lives and communities. Interestingly, eight of the women reported that their faith in the power and opportunities of educational leadership had inspired them to overcome their reservations concerning secondary headship and pursue promotion regardless of the disincentives they perceived. It is notable however that the aspirants' comments about the affordances of

headship were often expressed alongside and in conjunction with remarks concerning the risky existence of the secondary school headteacher. This finding appears to imply that potential aspirants hold neither purely positive nor negative views of the position. The women's perceptions and impressions of the headteacher role therefore were complex and multi-layered.

How do women deputy headteachers envisage their future professional selves?

The women's narratives showed evidence of considerable reflection, especially when contemplating their future career trajectories. The data suggests that far from being a mechanical process, the women's career decision-making had an affective and cognitive dimension. On the one hand, the women tended to exhibit a great deal of anxiety and hesitation. Although the intensity of these emotions varied between individuals, the ways in which the women talked about their potential future selves highlighted the unpredictable, abstract and potentially constraining nature of their professional futures. On the other hand, the women spoke to varying extents about their agentic abilities to strategise and exercise choice when planning for the future. Overall, the data revealed four distinct factors that had influenced and shaped the women's career decision-making to varying degrees: (1) their self-perceptions and life projects, (2) the advice and expertise of their personal and professional communities, (3) their observations of and relationship with the policy climate in education and (4) their values and beliefs.

Structure, agency and reflexivity

So far this chapter has presented a qualitative analysis of twelve women deputy headteachers' career histories and professional aspirations. The themes that emerged from my IPA analysis illustrate the ways in which structural forces *and* human agency had shaped, defined and sometimes constrained the career trajectories of individual women. The following section will discuss the findings of this study in relation to theoretical literature concerned with structure, agency and reflexivity.

The theory of structuration

As I explored in the literature review, Giddens' theory of structuration rejects and aims to move beyond the dualism of structure and agency (Heracleous and Hendry, 2000). To do this, he proposes the *duality of structure*: a central tenet of structuration theory. This is the idea that structure, the "rules" and "resources" of social systems, and agency, our ability to "have acted otherwise", are interdependent (Giddens, 1979, p. 56). The structural properties of social systems, then, are argued to "not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction" (Giddens, 1984, p. 374). Through the lens of Giddens' theory, the career histories and professional aspirations of my participants can be seen to be the product of *both* structure and agency (Jones and Karsten, 2008, p. 129). Looking at my data as a whole, it is possible to see structural forces and agentic human action as being intertwined in the women's career narratives. For instance, some of the participants spoke about the ways in which their ability to pursue career advancement was dependent (albeit to varying degrees) on both their own agentic career planning *and* the societal expectation placed on women to take on a caring role within the home. This interdependence is evident in Caitlin's narrative, for example, who remarked that "the choices we've made as a family have enabled me to do what I do professionally" (Caitlin, page 25, line 519 – 520).

Giddens (1979) argues that "every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member" (p. 5). Instead of being passive 'structural dopes' "determined by social structures" (Heracleous and Hendry, 2000, p. 1260), human beings are perceived to be highly knowledgeable with the capacity to rationally reflect on and justify their actions (Tucker, 1998, p. 76). Some of the data collected throughout this study supports Giddens' beliefs about the primacy of human knowledgeability over social forces. As I reported earlier in this chapter, my participants described consciously negotiating the constraints and affordances of their professional and personal lives in order to pursue career advancement. They positioned themselves throughout their narratives as individuals with the agentic capability "to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events"

(Giddens, 1984, p. 14). This was evident in the women's talk about career planning and its value in the current educational climate. Alice, for instance, remarked that career advancement "is all about planning" (page 18, line 372 – 373). The women's capacity to make active and strategic decisions was also apparent in the introspection they reported as being part of their role as senior leaders. For example, Sharon described consciously reflecting on her day in the following way:

I'm very self-analytical, so I'll be talking to myself about how could I have dealt with that differently, you know, could I have approached it in a different way? What would I do next time? ... I unpack my day if you like when I'm driving home (Sharon, page 16 – 17, line 321 – 336).

There is a great deal of self-knowledge and active reflection in this extract. It suggests the power of reflective human action over potentially constraining experiences and encounters. Careful contemplation was also evident in the ways in which the women talked about their professional futures. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, all of my participants were engaged in weighing up the pros and cons of secondary headship at the time of interview. Contradictory images of the secondary headteacher role emerged. Arguably, the conflicts inherent within this finding highlight the extent of and the complexity of the women's reflective powers.

Giddens argues that social structures are not (necessarily) synonymous with constraint, they are "always both constraining and enabling" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). His work suggests that there are certain structures associated with educational leadership and the labour market in England and these have created the conditions in which certain lived experiences and actions are possible for women deputy headteachers. However, it also suggests that individuals, as knowledgeable, rational and reflective agents, can transcend and alter the expectations (gendered or otherwise) ingrained within such structures. Structural properties, then, become malleable to a certain extent. Via the lens of Giddens' theory, it is possible to see some of the deputy headteachers in my study attempting to constitute social structures as much as they were constrained by them. For instance, it could be argued that by actively opting for stay-at-home

father arrangements, Caitlin and Alice were actively transcending the potential constraints stemming from societal discourses and attitudes associating women with childrearing and caring. They were “able to ‘act otherwise’” (Giddens, 1984, p. 14).

The theory of structuration does however have a number of limitations and these hinder its capacity to shed light on the professional lives and aspirations of my participants. As I noted in the literature review of this thesis, Archer (2010) argues that it is more analytically useful to separate agency from structure. She maintains that the separation of the two concepts allows for greater theorising about “the influences of men on society and vice versa” (p. 247). By conflating structure and agency, it is not possible to ascertain the circumstances under which an individual deputy headteacher may feel constrained or limited by structural forces. Likewise, perceiving agency and structure to be interrelated in a ‘duality of structure’ means that it is difficult to analyse the ways in which women’s “creative and transformative activities ... may come to the fore at certain other times and places” (Layder, 2006, p. 185). By arguing for the interrelationship of agency and structures, then, Giddens’ theory of structuration makes it difficult to assess the influence of individual constraining/enabling factors at any given time, or get to the heart of the moments in the women’s career trajectories where there was ‘more voluntarism’ or ‘more determinism’ (Archer, 2010, p. 229).

Furthermore, adopting Giddens’ structuration theory risks neglecting participants’ lived experiences and perceptions of structural forces. As Layder (2006) observes “Giddens’ insistence that structure can never be separated from people’s reasons and motivations reveals a tendency to emphasise agency rather than structure” (p. 183). It is argued that in his work Giddens underplays the structural forces in our society and, in doing so, “artificially inflates” the ability of individuals to exercise choice unimpeded (Archer, 2010, p. 234). Congruous with this observation, in their study of the career strategies of sixty eight white women and BAME legal professionals, Tomlinson and colleagues found that:

Even among a population of highly skilled, knowledgeable agents, structures are less malleable than Giddens (1984) asserts ... Many of the structural constraints articulated by our legal professionals were positioned as external forces that they needed to overcome (Tomlinson et al., 2013, p. 265).

The women in my study live in a society in which leadership is routinely aligned with masculinity, where there continues to be fewer women secondary headteachers than men and that childcare is stereotypically deemed to be 'women's work' in the professional as well as the domestic domain. Like the women in Tomlinson et al.'s study, my participants reported experiencing these aspects of social life as structural constraints that they were required to negotiate.

Internal conversations

In light of the limitations discussed above, the work of Margaret Archer (2003; 2007; 2012) facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which women deputies' career histories and professional aspirations are framed and shaped by structural properties and human agency. Through the lens of Archer's work, the deputy headteachers in this study can be seen as a heterogeneous group of agentic and highly evaluative individuals. The women in my study were 'active agents' or "people who can exercise some governance in their own lives" (Archer, 2007, p. 6). This form of self-direction can be found in the women's talk about career planning and balancing their professional and personal responsibilities. As I explored in the literature review of this thesis, unlike Giddens who advances the 'duality of structure', Archer retains an 'analytical dualism' or separation between human agency and social structure (see, for example, Archer, 2010). It is possible to see this distinction or separation in the way that she talks about the 'projects' we embark on as human beings. The women's lived and possible career trajectories explored in my study can be thought of as an ongoing 'project' i.e. they "involve an end that is desired, however tentatively or nebulously, and also some notion, however imprecise, of the course of action through which to accomplish it" (Archer, 2003, p. 6). Archer's work suggests that the projects we pursue as human beings are shaped by two distinct sets of powers, those of structural properties and those of human beings themselves. In

this study, the women spoke about the ways in which their careers had been limited or constrained to various extents by societal expectations concerning women and caring, governmental pressures and the workload of the deputy headteacher. In the women's talk of the obstacles they had encountered throughout their career trajectories, it is possible to see the causal powers of structural forces being exercised as constraint (Archer, 2007, p. 9). Conversely, in the women's talk of career planning and actively organising the disparate facets of their lives we see the individual using her causal powers to act. In advancing their careers in secondary education, then, the women in my study encountered both their agentic powers to act and the structural and cultural properties of our society (*ibid.* p. 7). Their narratives revealed that they had been required to confront and mediate the opposing and distinct forces of agency and structure in order to advance their careers.

The women who took part in this study were highly contemplative. During the interviews, I was granted (albeit limited and partial) access to their thinking as they reflected both on their teaching and leadership practices, as well as the career moves they had made and were intending to make in the future. Archer argues that the reflexive powers we hold as human beings mediate "the effects of our circumstances upon our actions" (Archer, 2012, p. 6). She posits that our reflexivity functions through the 'internal conversations' that we have with ourselves. It is within the interiority and relative safety of our own minds that we are said to "deliberate internally upon what to do in situations that were not of our making" (Archer, 2003, p. 342). 'Internal conversations', then, are argued to be mediatory mechanisms between social structures and human agency. Our inner-dialogue not only negotiates the influence that social forces have on us but also "our responses to them" (Archer, 2007, p. 15). It is these inner conversations with ourselves, Archer maintains, that "enable us to be the authors of our own projects in society" (*ibid.* p. 34).

IPA directs the researcher's attention towards the diversity as well as the commonality present among individuals. Indeed, my analysis highlighted the complex differences between what at first glance appeared to be a relatively

homogeneous group of women who were faced with the same occupational dilemma i.e. whether or not to aspire towards and apply for secondary headship. My findings indicate that individuals reacted very differently to the potentially constraining social forces they had encountered on their career journeys to date. For example, my data demonstrated very different reactions towards the responsibilities of motherhood. While Alice and Caitlin described being active agents who had worked reflexively so as to remain in full-time employment while their children were growing up, Jennifer reported having to subordinate her professional aspirations temporarily to take care of her child. Arguably, Giddens' structuration theory tell us very little about the heterogeneity that exists between individuals; it does not seem to account for diversity and the possibility that individuals may respond differently to the limitations and affordances they may encounter as they make their way through life. Archer's work, on the other hand, suggests that individuals who are similarly placed, such as the women in my study, "do not respond uniformly" or take the same courses of action when confronted with the same structural properties (Archer, 2012, p. 6). To illustrate the diversity that exists among individuals she identifies four distinct types of internal conversation: (1) communicative, (2) autonomous, (3) meta-reflexive and (4) fractured. A full exploration of this typology can be found in the literature review (see page 75). In outlining distinctive modes of reflexivity, Archer argues that internal conversations are "radically heterogeneous" and that each one will lead to a different 'stance' "towards society and its constraints and enablements" (Archer, 2003, p. 342).

As I anticipated would be the case when exploring the lives of senior leaders, there was no evidence to suggest that any of the women in my study could be termed "fractured reflexives". All participants exhibited a great deal of reflexive power and agentic action. The data did, however, suggest that all twelve women had ways of thinking about themselves in relation to their circumstances that could be termed 'autonomous', 'meta-reflexive' or 'communicative'. Drawing on Archer's distinct types of internal conversation, then, it is possible to posit three different types of potential headteacher aspirant: the autonomous potential aspirant (a strategic and decisive leader), the meta-reflexive potential aspirant (a

values-oriented professional) and the communicative potential aspirant (a person-centred educator). This typology reflects the distinctive ways in which the women deputy headteachers in this study spoke about their career histories and occupational aspirations. It also illustrates the three paths the women in my study described taking to achieve what Archer (2003) calls *modus vivendi* or “a set of practices which, in combination, both respects that which is ineluctable but also privileges that which matters most to the person concerned” (p. 149). The three groups that I outline below, however, are merely ‘ideal types’. Archer (2012) suggests that, although individuals exercise different modes of reflexivity at different times, most people have a dominant form of internal conversation (p. 12). In adopting this theory for the purposes of this thesis, however, I do not intend to replicate the rigidity that is perhaps present in Archer’s original analysis and framework; I do not wish to rule out the possibility that an individual may fit into more than one category or switch between modes at different times in their careers. Furthermore, in positing these ‘ideal types’, I do not intend to obscure the differences that exist between individuals or rule out the possibility that there may be other forms of reflexivity yet to be theorised. What is presented in Table 11, then, is a ‘best fit’ approach to identify participants’ perceptions of their careers as well as the structural forces and agentic action framing their professional aspirations. This categorisation is intended as an analytic lens through which to view the lived and envisaged careers of individual women deputy headteachers.

Table 11: *Three types of potential headteacher aspirant*

Autonomous potential aspirants (Defined as strategic and decisive leaders)	Meta-reflexive potential aspirants (Defined as values-oriented professionals)	Communicative potential aspirants (Defined as person-centred educators)
Alice Caitlin Dawn Jennifer Sophie	Beth Katherine Lorraine Madeline Naomi	Faye Sharon

The autonomous potential aspirant

Autonomous potential aspirants are self-sufficient, calculated and decisive. The women who matched this type most closely identified themselves as tomorrow's headteachers. They had prioritised and invested a great deal in their professional lives. This meant that their well-being and personal relationships had "been subordinated to this ultimate concern" (Archer, 2003, p. 213). Those delineated as autonomous potential aspirants described a clear history of career planning and having very definite professional goals. These women spoke about approaching their "occupational futures in a strategic manner" (Archer, 2007, p. 214). Autonomous potential aspirants, then, reported "knowing what they want and also knowing a good deal about how to go about it" (Archer, 2003, p. 254). They were confident social actors who actively searched for career advancement opportunities, and were able to anticipate and avoid any constraints they may encounter on the route to fulfilling their professional aspirations (Archer, 2003, p. 253; Archer, 2007, p. 214). Overall, autonomous potential aspirants talked about their future professional selves in ways that expose a "self-conscious delineation of the next stage(s) in ... [their] desired work project" (Archer, 2007, p. 214).

Table 12: *Participants characterised as autonomous potential aspirants*

Autonomous potential aspirants/ strategic and decisive leaders	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Illustrative Quotations</i>
Alice	“I was very clear ... that I wanted to go onto senior leadership” (page 2, line 23 – 24). “It is about planning” (page 18, line 372 – 273). “I’m starting my NPQH ... I’m pretty confident that from that point I would be starting to look for headships” (page 13, line 255 – 260).
Caitlin	“My plan is to [be a headteacher] before I’m forty. So that gives me four years” (page 18, line 357 – 358). “I want to be the best at what I do ... I’m naturally very driven and have very high expectations of myself” (page 1, line 37 – 40).
Dawn	“You have to work your life around your career” (page 5, line 88). “I’m very confident about my ability to deal with Ofsted” (page 13, line 267 – 268). “I’ve started looking at headships ... I’ve always thought you should do for headship when you feel completely competent in all areas” (page 6, line 120 – 124).
Jennifer	“In three years I want to be a headteacher” (page 21, line 428). “I would like that to be my decision rather than somebody else’s” (page 22 - 23, line 461 – 462).
Sophie	“I devote a lot of time, a lot of mental space and energy to my work and to leadership ... I spend very, very little effort and focus on my own personal life” (page 4, line 75 - 81). “I want to be able to have more autonomy to make those decisions myself” (page 19, line 391 – 392). “That’s the choice that I make. I don’t want to work as part of an academy chain because I like the fact that we are autonomous” (page 13, line 262 – 265).

The meta-reflexive potential aspirant

Meta-reflexive potential aspirants are values-oriented, contemplative and highly committed to the teaching profession. The women who matched this type most closely included both those who both aspired towards headship and those who were uncertain as to their professional futures. Meta-reflexive potential aspirants described teaching as a vocation and saw self-fulfilment as being achieved through ‘making a difference’ (Archer, 2007, p. 264). Prone to “self-interrogation” (Archer, 2003, p. 256), they did not perceive their professional lives in monetary terms. Instead, they were motivated to work towards a more democratic and just society. Meta-reflexive potential aspirants, then, had rejected “the ‘market’

hegemony of exchange relations over human relations” (Archer, 2007, p. 265). They envisaged their professional futures as an opportunity to seek “a better fit between who they seek to be and a social environment which permits expression of it” (Archer, 2003, p. 259). Meta-reflexives aimed to achieve a future working life that would be consistent with their person-centred values. The women tended to express a “willingness to pay the price” of any constraints or limitations they may encounter in order to achieve their ideals (Archer, 2003, p. 289). In this sense, meta-reflexive potential aspirants positioned themselves very differently towards structural forces and their own agentic capabilities than their more autonomous colleagues.

Table 13: *Participants characterised as meta-reflexive potential aspirants*

Meta-reflexive potential aspirants/ values-oriented professionals	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Illustrative Quotations</i>
Beth	<p>“I always have to work with disadvantaged, struggling kids in low income areas ... it’s my motivation” (page 4, line 81 – 83).</p> <p>“In a school like this, in an area of high deprivation, you’ve got a real opportunity to ignite in kids a love of learning and possibilities for the future” (page 21, line 430 – 433).</p>
Katherine	<p>“As long as you’ve got a really strong vision and ethos that is child sensitive and is about doing the right thing for the kids, then you will be absolutely fine ... you have that core purpose” (page 21, line 420 – 423).</p> <p>“It is very hard to deal with the safeguarding, child protection stuff ... They’re the ones that you lie awake at night thinking about ... Coming up to Christmas there was a few parents and children that I just couldn’t stop thinking about” (page 10 – 11, line 189 – 211)</p>
Lorraine	<p>“It’s the community. I’m watching what’s happening here, we’re transforming the community” (page 16, line 321 – 322).</p> <p>“You’re having an impact, a real impact on people’s lives. You’re making a difference” (page 5, line 86 – 87).</p>
Madeline	<p>“Don’t let the postcode influence the outcome” (page 12, line 246).</p> <p>“We’re changing lives” (page 1, line 27).</p> <p>“I need to pay back the community” (page 25, line 514 – 515).</p>
Naomi	<p>“My values and my principles are the same whether I’m in school or not” (page 9, line 175 – 176).</p> <p>“I think you have to stick to your values and work out what it is that matters in education. Be prepared to not compromise on that” (page 20 – 21, line 418 – 420).</p>

The communicative potential aspirant

Communicative potential aspirants are person-centred and relationship oriented. The women who matched this type most closely were uncertain about or had rejected the possibility of secondary headship. Communicative potential aspirants described their family and friends as their “ultimate concern” (Archer, 2003, p. 169). They perceive human relations as “the most important aspect of employment, overriding considerations of pay, promotions and prospects” (Archer, 2007, p. 172). The pursuit of occupational advancement, status and power, then, was perceived to be secondary to the needs of their colleagues and students. These women tended to value “occupational continuity” (Archer, 2003, p. 168). They had worked at and/or aimed to stay at the same school for a sustained period of time. Communicative potential aspirants reported a ‘thought and talk’ pattern of reflexivity (Archer, 2007, p. 159). They described sharing and talking through their occupational dilemmas and concerns with trusted others i.e. family members and friends. Overall, the women described “modest” professional aspirations (Archer, 2007, p. 191). Their envisaged future professional selves were notably similar to their current occupational identities. Communicative potential aspirants reported having evaded both constraints and enablements throughout their careers in favour of maintaining a sense of continuity and social well-being.

Table 14: *Participants characterised as communicative potential aspirants*

Communicative potential aspirants/ person-centred educators	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Illustrative Quotations</i>
Faye	"I've never moved schools ... I have not been particularly career minded, I've just worked hard at the school I am at" (page 8, line 151 – 153). "I know everybody and everybody knows me" (page 17, line 342 – 343). "I've got an excellent way with people and excellent way with those youngsters and staff" (page 16, line 322 – 324). "That is where my husband is saying you are just going to have to say no because why should he get you on the cheap? I get that, I understand that" (page 16, line 326 – 329).
Sharon	"I'm quite a social animal outside of school" (page 19, line 384 – 385). "I might be a deputy headteacher but I'm a wife and a mother and a sister and a daughter and everything else that goes with life" (page 5, line 93 – 95). "I know so many female teachers that are in failed relationships, broken marriages and I don't want that for myself" (page 5, line 96 – 98). "I had a great chat with my husband and my family and chose not to [apply]" (page 10, line 202 – 203).

Summary

This chapter has explored and analysed the main findings and issues that arose from my analysis of twelve women deputy headteachers' career narratives. Three super-ordinate themes - managing constraint, motivating forces and perceptions of secondary headship and the future - emerged from the IPA analytic process outlined in chapter 3. Having explored and analysed each theme, the data revealed that the career histories and professional aspirations of individual participants had been shaped by both structural forces and their own agentic capacity to act and choose. The analysis presented in this chapter, however, highlighted a large degree of heterogeneity between participants; each individual woman described mediating and making sense of structural forces and her own agentic capacity to act in a different way.

Drawing on Margaret Archer's theory of reflexivity as a heterogeneous and mediatory mechanism between structural forces and human agency, I proposed

three distinct types of potential headteacher aspirant: (1) the autonomous potential aspirant (a strategic and decisive leader), (2) the meta-reflexive potential aspirant (a values-oriented professional) and (3) the communicative potential aspirant (a person-centred educator). Each one of these types reflects a different stance towards the constraints and enablements of both the teaching profession and society at large. The chapter that follows discusses the implications of my findings for both theory and practice. It will also explore the limitations of this study and make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

We make our way through the world by using the human power of reflexivity.

(Archer, 2007, p. 315)

Introduction

The previous chapter considered the ways in which my participants had experienced and negotiated their career trajectories in secondary education. The women's in-depth narratives revealed the nuances and complexities of their professional lives and occupational aspirations. The themes that emerged from my analysis highlighted the heterogeneity that exists between women deputies, the perceived affordances and precarity of secondary headship as well as the mediatory role that reflexive, 'internal conversations' play in helping individuals to make sense of their professional lives and experiences (Archer, 2007, p. 4).

This concluding chapter consists of a series of reflections. It begins by revisiting the key insights that arose from the study reported on in this thesis. I then identify the originality of my research, and consider the practical and theoretical implications of my findings. Having made some recommendations for policy and practice, I then move on to reflect on the limitations of the project. Finally, I propose avenues for further research and reflect on what I have learnt as a doctoral researcher.

Reflecting on my findings

This study was undertaken to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of women deputy headteachers. It aimed to explore the ways in which twelve women deputies, as potential aspirants to headship, perceived the secondary headteacher role. The study also sought to gain an insight into participants' career histories and how these had informed their professional aspirations. With these aims in mind, I posed the following research questions:

- How do women deputy headteachers make sense of their career histories?
- How do women deputy headteachers experience deputy headship?
- How do women deputy headteachers perceive secondary headship?
- How do women deputy headteachers envisage their future professional selves?

Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the phenomenon of women deputies' career trajectories, three super-ordinate themes were identified: (1) managing constraint, (2) motivating forces and (3) perceptions of secondary headship and the future. These super-ordinate themes along with their accompanying subordinate themes are discussed at length in the previous chapter. The reflection below focuses on the key insights that emerged across the study's themes, namely those concerned with heterogeneity, risk and reflection.

Heterogeneity

While analysing the sense that my participants had made of their career histories and professional aspirations, I noted various commonalities between their accounts. Consonant with existing literature on gendered educational leadership (see, for example, Cunneen and Harford, 2016), all of my participants perceived their careers to have been shaped by a number of constraining and enabling influences both on their journeys to and while fulfilling the role of deputy headteacher. Furthermore, all of the women in the sample had invested a great deal, both personally and professionally, in their career advancement, the young people they taught and the communities they served. Yet, as this study progressed, I became increasingly aware of the nuanced divergences that existed between my participants, their perceptions and motivations. Far from a homogeneous group who had experienced and made sense of occupational constraints, enablers and possibilities in identical ways, my sample was made up of individual women whose idiosyncratic lenses had helped them to uniquely navigate and position themselves in the social world. As I pointed out in the

previous chapter, the women had perceived and experienced their responsibilities to dependents, the affordances and challenges of deputy headship, and the pressures of workload and accountability very differently.

As discussed in the literature review of this thesis, it is commonly assumed that all deputy headteachers aspire towards headship (Harris et al., 2003, p. 9). This assumption suggests that deputy headteachers are a homogeneous or monolithic group with the same life projects, values and professional priorities. The findings of this IPA study, however, do not support this view of potential headteacher aspirants. While eight out of twelve of the women who participated in this study had decided to pursue headship, I found there to be little uniformity in the feelings individual women espoused towards the headteacher role, or the influence these feelings appeared to exert on their plans for the future. For instance, Jennifer's and Beth's professional aspirations and feelings towards the role were clouded by concerns about age and geography respectively, while Katherine's professional future hinged on her finding a headship that was congruent with what she perceived to be her "urbanised" leadership identity (Katherine, page 16, line 318). The data revealed that the women's professional aspirations and envisaged future selves were laced with nuances and idiosyncrasies. In writing this thesis, I have attempted to avoid oversimplifying this complexity. I've tried to make sense of dissenting experiences and perceptions as opposed to papering over them. Like the under-representation of women in secondary headship, women deputies' career histories and professional aspirations are a complex phenomenon (Fuller and Harford, 2016). The findings of this study caution against unthinkingly equating deputy headship with the indiscriminating and uniform ambition to be a headteacher. This blanket assumption appears to be of little value to those interested in understanding the career decision-making and professional motivations of individual women leaders. The lived experiences, sense making and perceptions of *individual* potential aspirants deserves a place at the heart of our theorising of the under-representation of women in educational leadership.

Risk

When I started this study, I did not anticipate that I would encounter simultaneously held, contradictory perceptions of the secondary headteacher role. Yet, as this study has progressed, I became increasingly alert to the fluid and prism-like nature of the women's lifeworlds which had enabled them to see a whole spectrum of future possibilities, both constraining and enabling. The women's narratives revealed that their understanding of and relationship to secondary headship was multifaceted and highly complex. Consistent with various studies concerned with the importance of high-quality educational leadership (see, for example, Leithwood et al., 2004), participants spoke about the positive influence that headteachers can exert on students' learning and life chances, especially in schools in difficult circumstances. The aspirants in the sample tended to contrast the capacity that headteachers have to take positive action with their own perceived inability to act independently and autonomously as deputies. They sought the increased sense of agency, choice and power they saw as accompanying headship. Yet, while the majority of the women who took part in this study aspired towards headship, all participants reflected on the risks and precariousness of applying for and taking on a vacant headship post in a rapidly changing and high stakes educational culture. The women spoke about the increasing accountability and 'greedy' workloads headteachers have to navigate as well as the unpredictable nature of England's educational policy climate. These impressions are in-keeping with those reported in the research literature concerned with headteacher succession and recruitment in England (Bush, 2015; The Future Leaders Trust, 2016; NCSL, 2007; Thomson et al., 2003). In short, headship was seen as a more precarious career move than any they had taken before.

As I explored in the previous chapter, all of the deputy headteachers believed headship to pose a greater threat to their occupational stability ("I don't want to walk into school one day and not have a job anymore" (Caitlin, page 21, line 437 – 439)) and reputation ("headship could ruin a lot of people, both professionally and personally" (Sharon, page 31, line 645 – 646)) than deputy headship. For the most part, the constraining and punitive power of Ofsted was perceived to be

the primary source of this threat. The women aligned the public nature of a negative Ofsted report with personal risk and loss. The fears expressed by these potential aspirants are echoed in the experiences of existing headteachers reported in the literature. MacBeath and colleagues (2009), for instance, found that:

Among heads who had been subject to recent inspection, some spoke in interviews of their resentment at their professional judgement being questioned and questioned so publicly. “Tension” and “anxiety” were common epithets but there was also stronger language by a few who used words such as “fear”, “trauma” and “public humiliation” (p. 33 – 34).

In the previous chapter, I noted that the majority of my participants were working in ‘challenging’ professional contexts located in low income communities at the time of interview. Those who explicitly aspired towards headship indicated that they hoped to lead similar schools. Yet, for some of the aspirants in the sample their future plans were marred with the realisation that these posts may be significantly more precarious than those in other, less challenging circumstances. Alice, for instance, remarked:

I’m not sure I want to take on a really heavy school with real behaviour issues that’s in real special measures. I think you need your second headships for those sorts of things (Alice, page 15, line 295 - 297).

Likewise, Dawn reported:

I have looked at a school that was completely inadequate and I think that would be a bit too much for a first headship (Dawn, page 16, line 326 - 328).

Both extracts reveal undercurrents of risk and anxiety. They reveal the desire to protect oneself from the negative repercussions and damaging consequences of being a head who fails to improve a school in “special measures”. Perryman (2006) observes, Ofsted’s inspection framework assumes that “all schools can follow the same recipe for success, and any deviation from this norm can be an indicator that a school is failing” (p. 150). Yet, by discounting the influence of contextual factors such as socio-economic background on students’ attainment and taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach, Ofsted’s inspection regime ensures that

some headteacher posts are perceived as riskier career moves than others. Impressions such as these on the part of potential headteacher aspirants could, as Courtney (2013) observes, “have consequences for headteacher recruitment and retention in such schools, and for social justice for their pupils” (p. 168).

For eight of the women in the sample, their belief in the power of educational leadership to transform lives and communities had motivated them to aspire towards and pursue headship posts. The data however shows that these aspirations were not formed in the absence of doubts and anxieties concerning the precarity of the role, but in spite of them. In the previous chapter, I speculated that risk taking may be a part of agentic educational leadership in the current policy climate. Indeed, Howson (2016) argues that “grappling with uncertainty is at the core of all leadership. Successful leaders prepare for this fact and manage the consequences” (cited in The Future Leaders Trust, 2016, p. 5). The women in this study reported having to negotiate potential risk, exposedness and doubt while making a decision about their professional futures. They recognised the need for a risk-tolerant outlook and calculated risk taking if they were to step up to headship.

Reflection

Smith et al. (2009) note that “when people are engaged with ‘an experience’ of something major in their lives”, such as contemplating a significant career move, “they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening” (p. 3.). My participants’ accounts revealed the considerable reflection prompted by the decision as to whether or not to aspire towards and apply for secondary headship. The idiographic nature of IPA permitted an in-depth analysis of women deputies’ reflections and feelings as they made sense of what it was to be a headteacher, and questioned the extent to which the role was compatible with their values, professional identities and life projects.

Archer (2007) argues that introspective, reflexive deliberations, such as those my participants were engaged in as they contemplated their career histories and occupational aspirations, “form the basis upon which people determine their

future courses of action” and make their way through the world (p. 4 – 5). As I noted in Chapter 2, Archer defines ‘reflexivity’ as “the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to their (social) contexts and vice versa” (*ibid.* p. 4). She argues that reflexivity is exercised through ‘internal conversations’, an inner dialogue in which we deliberate about ourselves, our values, goals and relationship to the social world (Archer, 2003; Archer, 2007). In the previous chapter, I utilised Archer’s theory of reflexivity to propose an analytic tool through which to make sense of deputies’ perceptions and experiences. Through the lens of Archer’s work, three types of potential headteacher aspirant emerged: (1) the autonomous potential aspirant or the strategic and decisive leader, (2) the meta-reflexive potential aspirant or values-oriented professional and (3) the communicative potential aspirant or person-centred educator. These ideal types demonstrated different ‘stances’ towards the constraining and enabling effects of headship and career advancement, as well as different ways of reflecting on one’s career journey. They also served to illustrate the heterogeneous ways in which a small sample of women deputies reflected on, positioned themselves towards and navigated their way through their careers in secondary education.

While conducting this study, I became increasingly alert to the benefits of storytelling and having the space to critically reflect on our lived experiences, perceptions and sense making, especially at a time of transition or when the future appears unclear. One participant remarked that she had found it “really thought provoking” reflecting on her career while being interviewed (Madeline, personal correspondence, July 2014). Goodson and Sikes (2001) note various benefits of interviewing techniques which encourage participants to explore their life stories and career histories. They argue that this process can lead to “improved self-knowledge” and insights into “how our past might influence our present and our future” (p. 73). The authors also note that “taking some time to step back and examine and appraise what we are doing and why, frequently has positive consequences for practice and attitude” (*ibid.* p. 73). Goodson and Sikes’ observations highlight the importance of introspection and deliberation. This seems particularly important when contemplating future career trajectories, and

deciding whether or not to climb the next rung of the career ladder. The subordinate theme 'balancing work and well-being' focused on the time pressures, 'greedy' workloads and stringent accountability regimes the women reported having to negotiate in their professional lives. Participants described continual activity, and an inability to "switch off" from work-related issues (see, for example, Katherine, page 9, line 178 - 182). Looking at the data as a whole, there appears to be a stark disconnect between the quiet, contemplative reflection the women appeared to require to make sense of and plan for their professional futures, and the continual activity and change characterising both individual schools and the wider educational climate. I wondered to what extent it was possible that the hectic, rapidly changing nature of their working lives was impeding the introspection, deliberation and critical reflection required to plan their future career trajectories. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, Dawn remarked:

I think sometimes in the midst of trying to get all the work done, and trying to get everything ticked off my to do list every day, I forget the bigger picture - my career development (Dawn, page 7, line 134 - 138).

Her words suggest that potential headteacher aspirants (male and female) require more space and more time to make careful, considered decisions about their professional futures. The chance to engage in internal conversation is required before deciding to aspire towards and apply for what is a highly influential yet publicly accountable role.

Having reflected on the key insights that emerged across the study's themes, I will now move on to discuss the originality of the study.

Reflecting on my contribution to knowledge

While my findings complement those of existing studies, this research project makes four key contributions to the literature on gender and educational leadership. Firstly, the findings presented in this thesis enhance our understanding of the career histories of women deputy headteachers and the ways in which they envisage their occupational futures. My research focuses exclusively on deputy headteachers. As I noted in Chapter 2, deputies are an

under-researched group compared to their headteacher counterparts (Harris et al., 2003; Harvey, 1994; Lee et al., 2009; Ribbins, 1997). The present study, then, should prove valuable to those researching this professional group in the future.

Secondly, the study makes a methodological contribution. As I noted in the research design chapter of this thesis, IPA is not commonly used by those working in the field of gender and educational leadership. This study has gone some way towards illustrating the utility of the approach for those researching the career decision-making of individual leaders, and arguing for IPA's inclusion in the repertoire of methods used to research gender issues in educational leadership.

Thirdly, the idiographic analysis advanced throughout this thesis demonstrates the individuality, idiosyncrasy and heterogeneity present within a small sample of potential headteacher aspirants. This points to the possible dangers of treating the potential pool of headteacher candidates as a homogeneous group with the same motivations, perceptions and goals. It suggests that more nuanced, individualised approaches to dealing with the under-representation of women in secondary headship (and headteacher recruitment challenges more generally) may be needed.

Fourthly, utilising Archer's (2003, 2007, 2012) theory of reflexivity, this study provides an analytical tool for the exploration of women deputies' perceptions, lived experiences and occupational aspirations. It offers the potential for new insights into the motivations, values and decision-making of senior women leaders, as well as the diverse ways in which they navigate and make sense of the constraints and enabling influences in the teaching profession and wider society.

Reflecting on the implications of the study

Throughout this thesis, I have aimed to explore the nuances of individual participants' lived experiences and occupational aspirations. The complexity and idiosyncrasy of the findings examined within its pages are not a suitable

foundation on which to make wide-ranging policy recommendations or propose definitive solutions that will ensure the equal representation of women in secondary headship. The implications explored below, then, are tentative in nature. They are not intended to be simplistic or 'one size fits all' solutions. It is anticipated, however, that the implications of this study may be of interest to potential and current headteachers, those involved in developing and recruiting senior women leaders as well as those engaged in educational policy making.

Implications for potential headteacher aspirants

Alongside talk of the potential constraints they may encounter in the future, the women who participated in this study spoke of their agentic capacity to make decisions about their future career trajectories. They reported using their own agentic capacity to make professional choices. This suggests, as Smith (2011a) points out, that "women do exercise personal agency, make choices (albeit within certain constraints), negotiate barriers and resist the factors limiting their freedom" (p. 22). This finding has important implications for individual women and the ways in which they make sense of themselves and their careers. Although structural and cultural forces such as governmental policies limit our autonomy to a certain extent, individual women are the authors of their own career stories. Both aspirants and non-aspirants shape their own narratives. This is an inspiring thought. By recognising and celebrating their own capacity for agency and choice in the professional arena, individuals can become empowered to believe in their own ability to take charge of their professional futures. Furthermore, in becoming conscious of their own capacity to act, aspiring women leaders can be encouraged to take proactive steps such as career planning, networking and seeking an appropriate mentor.

Implications for existing headteachers

IPA encourages the researcher to consider the ways in which individuals negotiate the social, cultural and historical circumstances in which they find themselves (Smith et al., 2009). The individuals who took part in this study were situated in very particular organisational contexts, some of which were described as being more gender equitable than others. Existing headteachers, governing

bodies and other decision makers such as academy sponsors have a key part to play in creating more gender equitable school cultures. This may be done by making a conscious effort to ensure that both men and women are considered for all mentoring and career opportunities, as well as guaranteeing that all those involved in staff recruitment have undertaken rigorous “equal opportunities training” (Coleman, 2002, p. 48). Steps such as these would help to ensure that women entering the profession as well as those with more experience are sent the message that senior leadership posts are attainable. Showunmi (2016) advises that “one way in which the ethos of an organisation might be changed is through having a focus on equality/diversity/social justice at the heart of ongoing professional development” (p. 77). Indeed, courses and mentoring schemes aimed at supporting and promoting the career development of all are essential if we are to create truly equitable schools.

Being a deputy headteacher had allowed the women who took part in this study to observe, work closely with and, crucially, question the decisions of the headteachers they worked for. They had peaked behind the curtain of secondary headship, and now found themselves faced with the decision as to whether or not to pursue secondary headship themselves. As individuals who had invested heavily in their careers in order to work their way up the occupational hierarchy, the decision as to whether or not to pursue headship had enormous consequences. It had the potential to have a profound impact on their sense of self and life course. Making this decision and potentially being on the cusp of real professional change appeared to create a meaningful reality that participants were experiencing and trying to make sense of. Their next step had the potential for significant change, both in their professional and personal lives. Unsurprisingly, then, the women’s narratives were highly reflective. Yet, as I explored above, the women’s talk of their future selves and the importance of making a careful, considered decision were juxtaposed with talk of the ‘greedy’, all-encompassing nature of deputy headship. This suggested that women’s professional lives left little time for the reflection and evaluation required to formulate future career plans. This finding appears to suggest that the deputy headteacher experience could be usefully enriched by providing deputies with

the time and space to consider their future career options and formulate aspirations accordingly. Existing heads may facilitate this process by allocating and protecting time for deputies to consider and plan for their professional futures. This may help to create a school culture in which career aspirations, planning and anxieties are openly discussed among staff.

Implications for leadership development programmes

Throughout this thesis, I have argued for a more nuanced analysis of women's professional lives that takes into account the divergences as well as the commonalities that exist among individuals. Indeed, my findings highlight the differences that existed between my participants, their career experiences and professional aspirations. The variations between the women deputies in my sample suggest that a simple, 'one size fits all' approach to identifying, training and supporting aspiring women leaders may be insufficient. My findings appear to support the argument for more individualised, bespoke leadership development programmes that take into account the diverse motivations, values and life projects of potential headteacher aspirants.

Throughout my study, I became acutely aware that many of the women in my sample perceived headship to be a highly risky endeavour. As I reported in the previous chapter, participants' concerns stemmed from their beliefs about the precarity of headship in the current educational climate, and the likelihood that being a headteacher may involve skills they felt themselves lacking. Ensuring appropriate and targeted support for potential headteacher aspirants that addresses individuals' anxieties may therefore be a useful priority for those tasked with identifying and training future senior leaders. As MacBeath et al. (2009) remark, such anxieties "could be addressed through improved guidance, support, CPD and exemplar practice in strategic and personnel leadership" (p. 56).

Implications for Ofsted

This study has briefly explored the impact of Ofsted's inspection regime on the experiences and aspirations of women deputy headteachers; the women who

took part in the study spoke about their experiences of being accountable to Ofsted and the punitive measures they feared headteachers faced if judged to be inadequate. For some, this was a significant disincentive to headship. Conceivably, if Ofsted were to support and work more closely with senior leaders this would create a less disciplinary, penalising inspection regime which may, in turn, entice more potential aspirants to step up to headship.

Implications for policy makers

Taken together, the women's accounts suggested that the rapidly changing nature of the educational culture in England was hindering their ability to formulate career plans and/or to consider pursuing promotion. It may, therefore, be useful for policy makers to consider slowing or relaxing the pace of educational policy change. This would give potential aspirants the time and mental space to self-evaluate, consider their career options and take the steps required to pursue career advancement.

It was striking that, while exploring the obstacles to career advancement, the women spoke about the professional and public spheres of their lives alongside and in conjunction with one another. Their work as deputy headteachers had clearly had an impact on their home lives (and vice versa). Perhaps not surprisingly, caring responsibilities were found to be one of the most prominent factors constraining women's career choices. In the previous chapter, I noted that the women positioned themselves towards and managed these roles and responsibilities differently. It was, however, striking that all of the home-family arrangements referred to were accompanied by references to one parent or carer (male or female) having to make sacrifices in the professional domain. It seems, as Connolly et al. (2016) point out, that "British societal infrastructure still tends to promote and support a full-time breadwinner plus part-time carer model" (p. 16). The author's claim this is "slowing adjustment to the gender revolution" (*ibid.* p. 16). For the women who participated in this study, the decision to become a caregiver was not divorced from their professional lives and experiences; caring responsibilities were perceived to have influenced their career decision-making in the past, and were reported to be informing, to varying extents, their

professional aspirations and career plans moving forward. Consequently, it seems that if we are to encourage more women (and men) to take on the challenge of headship, government policy makers need to respect our caring roles and responsibilities, and build more flexibility into organisational and societal structures to ensure individuals can strike a workable balance between their professional and private lives (Coleman, 2002, p. 158). This may take the form of additional professional and emotional support for women and men returning from maternity/ paternity leave and those caring for young children or other dependent relatives, such as ageing parents. This would help those with parenting and other caring responsibilities feel supported to achieve their career goals.

To summarise, the implications outlined above advocate increased collegiality, support and solidarity in the teaching profession, both at national and local levels. I firmly believe that initiatives aimed at addressing recruitment and equality issues at the secondary headteacher level should not be done to potential aspirants, but rather in collaboration with and in response to the views of potential headteacher aspirants. It is only by truly valuing and listening to the voices of individuals that the perceived disincentives of headship for women (and men) may be addressed.

Reflecting on the limitations of the study

This study aimed to better our understanding of the career experiences and professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers. The findings and discussion presented in this thesis provide various insights into the career decision-making of twelve potential headteacher aspirants. Like all research projects, however, this study suffers from a number of limitations. In Chapter 3, I explored the conceptual and practical limitations of IPA as a methodological approach. This discussion included consideration of the role of language in IPA, the analytical guidelines provided by the IPA community and IPA researchers' use of the term "cognition". What follows is an extension of this discussion. In the section below, I reflect on the potential weaknesses of the study and what I would do differently if I were to undertake this project again.

The IPA research presented in this thesis is idiographic in nature, and is based on a small, homogeneous sample of twelve. Since the study was limited to the sense-making and lifeworlds of such a small group of individuals, it is not possible to make general claims about the career decision-making of *all* women deputies (Langdrige, 2007). The study's scope may, therefore, be perceived to be a significant limitation. In presenting my research, however, I am not claiming that the women who participated in this study are typical of all potential aspirants to headship. The study was, after all, small scale, idiographic and exploratory. It was conducted in a very particular social, educational and policy climate with individuals who had experienced, made sense of and interpreted their professional lives very differently. Moreover, as Kvale (2007) states, the qualitative interview is "a construction site of knowledge" (p. 21). The meanings and experiences explored are constituted and co-constructed by interviewer and interviewee. It is not possible to claim, therefore, that the accounts captured in this thesis are 'true' or that their content would not change in different circumstances, or in the presence of a different doctoral researcher. While the idiosyncratic nature of the experiences, meanings and interpretations discussed in this thesis mean that universal and general claims are not possible, I would like to reiterate an earlier point. In the research design chapter of this thesis, I cite Smith et al. (2009) who argue that "the particular and the general are not so distinct" (p. 31). They argue that in representing specific individuals' perceptions of the particular phenomenon under investigation, IPA researchers provide their readers with an opportunity to consider the commonalities they share with the interviewee and, in turn, the universality of the experiences being claimed. Storytelling and the inclusion of idiosyncratic yet richly detailed narratives in a body of literature, then, provides an important sense-making function. They help us to better understand and make sense of our own experiences.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a major weakness of this study is that it is limited to the perceptions and lived experiences of white, heterosexual women. Consequently, the extent to which other identities influence the career experiences and professional aspirations of women deputies remains unknown. While IPA research requires a relatively homogeneous sample (Smith et al.,

2009), women deputy headteachers in England occupy a range of demographic characteristics not represented in the qualitative data I collected. In this thesis, I have considered, albeit to a limited extent, the interrelationship between age and gender, and the ways in which these facets of identity influenced individuals' thinking about their access to and enactment of senior leadership positions (see, for example, the narratives of Faye and Jennifer). This study did not, for instance, include the career experiences and aspirations of BAME, lesbian or disabled women deputies. By drawing on a limited range of identities, my study neglects some of the plurality, richness and divergences that may appear if my sample included a greater variety of demographic characteristics. Although some of these identity strands are under-represented in educational leadership (see, for example, Showunmi, 2016), there needs to be further research taking an intersectional approach to the lives and experiences of potential and existing women leaders. If I were to do this study again I would reconsider the sampling strategy I used, and its implications. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, snowball sampling has numerous limitations (see, for example, Browne, 2005; Cohen et al., 2011). The women I interviewed did not provide access to participants with a great variety of demographic characteristics. This was either because their social and professional networks did not include a great deal of heterogeneity, or that some groups of women deputies did not wish to take part. Moreover, my identities (my whiteness for example) may have had an effect. On reflection, I am left wondering whether a sampling method where I actively sought variation between women deputies may have resulted in richer, more nuanced data. If I were to take this approach, I would need to consider ways in which I may be able to analyse the cumulative effects of an individual's different identities in a way that does not detract from the complexity of each identity strand. This would certainly be a methodological challenge but may be a way of uncovering further nuance and complexity in the career narratives of women deputy headteachers.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued for IPA's inclusion in the range of methods currently used to research gender and educational leadership. In doing so, I have told a methodological story alongside one about the career histories and professional aspirations of twelve women deputies. I have emphasised the

importance of individual voices, complexity and idiosyncrasy when considering potential aspirants' perceptions of secondary headship and their occupational intentions. Yet, while telling this methodological story, I have been confronted by a juxtaposition between the idiosyncratic and the mainstream, the individual and the group, divergence and commonality. IPA's analytic process forces the researcher to move from exploring the nuances of an individual narrative in an in-depth manner to creating a table of themes for an entire group. In writing up such a project, the researcher has to walk a tightrope between the nuances of an individual narrative and the broad patterns and commonalities that exist across participants' accounts (Smith et al., 2009, p. 107). This is a balance that I have found difficult to strike. I chose to poetically represent each of my participants' narratives with the intention of doing justice to idiosyncrasy, yet I also outlined a typology of potential aspirants that actively groups participants together. I fear this creates a tension in my work. Reflecting on my thesis as a whole, I still feel that I have not been able to represent the women's narratives in a way that does not obscure elements of their stories. There was complexity and richness in individual narratives that I could not explore in the confines of this thesis, and I believe that the study is limited by its absence. Likewise, there were commonalities that existed among the women that were not captured in the super-ordinate and subordinate themes that emerged or the typology I produced. Since I had to be concise and produce a coherent account of my research, it was not possible to explore these additional divergences and commonalities. A smaller sample size may alleviate this tension to an extent. Indeed, if I were to design another IPA study in the future I would consider drawing on a smaller number of participants, conducting multiple interviews with the same participant and exploring each facet of their career story in more detail. This would further illuminate dissenting voices which may be at odds with those officially or more commonly expressed. This may also help to avoid falling into the trap of oversimplifying the huge amount of complexity that emerged from individual participants' career narratives. Furthermore, a smaller sample size may allow for greater experimentation with IPA, and further consideration of how IPA may be useful to researchers studying both educational leadership and education more generally.

Reflecting on further research

This study has raised many issues that warrant further investigation and discussion. Firstly, given ongoing concerns regarding the desirability of the headteacher role and the recruitment of tomorrow's school leaders (Bush, 2015; The Future Leaders Trust, 2016), more research focusing on the motivations, views and aspirations of potential headteacher aspirants is urgently needed. This would help policy makers and researchers better understand what more can be done to encourage deputies to aspire towards and apply for vacant headship posts. I would, therefore, echo Lee et al. (2009, p. 203) who call for a more robust body of research literature focusing exclusively on deputy headteachers.

In accordance with the idiographic principles of IPA, the study reported on in this thesis focused on a small homogeneous sample. Despite the 'theoretical generalisability' of IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009, p. 4), the findings presented in the previous chapter may be a useful springboard for a larger, quantitative piece of work focusing on women deputies' occupational aspirations. For instance, Marianne Coleman's survey instrument (Coleman, 2002, p. 171 – 178) may, with permission, be adapted to explore the career histories and professional aspirations of a much larger sample of women deputy headteachers. This sort of project could paint a more complete picture of the motivations, aspirations and perceptions of the potential pool of female headteacher candidates in England. Research of this kind would be of use to researchers, policy makers and those tasked with identifying and training tomorrow's headteachers.

As stated in Chapter 3, this study was not designed to investigate the differences between men and women. It aimed to explore the diversity and commonality among a small group of individual women. It would, however, be interesting to compare the findings reported in this thesis to those of a future IPA study which focused on the career experiences, motivations and aspirations of male deputies. Exploring both the divergence and convergence both within and between gender categories may be highly illuminating.

The sample drawn on in this study consisted entirely of white women and, as I have mentioned, this is a significant limitation of my work. There is a need for future research which explores the ways in which gender interacts with ethnicity, social class, disability and other identity strands to influence individuals' access to senior leadership posts (Coleman, 2012; Showunmi, 2016). An intersection that may be a fruitful area for further research is that of age. The experiences of the older women in this study (Faye and Jennifer) were particularly interesting. Both participants perceived their age and gender as being potential obstacles to career advancement and satisfaction in the current educational climate. Edge et al. (2016) argue that there are many differences between senior leaders belonging to Generation X (those under 40 years of age) and the baby-boomers that preceded them. The authors maintain that the two generations perceive their careers and working lives in dissimilar ways (*ibid.* p. 2). A future study investigating older women teachers' and leaders' career histories, perceptions and aspirations may contribute to our understanding of generational difference in educational leadership, and point to ways in which the teaching profession can best recognise, and ultimately retain, experienced members of staff. Likewise, further studies focusing on the careers, experiences and aspirations of young leaders (both Generation X and Generation Y/ millennials who were born between 1978 and 1990 (Edge et al., 2016, p. 5)) may be illuminating. An investigation into their attitudes towards career and headship may aid succession planning, and provide a useful addition to the gender and educational leadership literature.

Finally, further work is needed to explore the relationship between reflexivity, the individual and career aspiration in the field of education. By using Archer's model of reflexivity as a theoretical lens, researchers could further investigate and compare the lives, careers and aspirations of autonomous, meta-reflexive and communicative potential aspirants. This could be used to inform the theory and practice of leadership preparation.

In summary, it has been suggested that there are three directions in which future research might usefully proceed:

1. More qualitative and quantitative research may be undertaken into the lived experiences and perceptions of women and men deputy headteachers.
2. Researchers may fruitfully explore the ways in which gender, ethnicity, age and other identity strands interact to influence the career advancement of individual women, and the factors contributing to their constraint and enablement in the labour market.
3. Continued investigation into individual teachers' and leaders' reflexive 'internal conversations' and their influence on career aspirations may be illuminating.

Reflecting on my PhD as a learning experience

Finlay and Gough (2003) describe reflection as “thinking about something after the event”, while reflexivity is perceived to involve “a more immediate, dynamic and continuing self-awareness” (p. ix). I have attempted to adopt both modes of thinking while designing, conducting and writing up this study. As I come towards the end of my doctoral journey, I feel it is appropriate to reflect on and reflexively consider what I have discovered during my time as a PhD student. What follows is a brief account of my learning.

The under-representation of women in educational leadership is “widely acknowledged”, and is a phenomenon which has prompted commentary and investigation from scholars across the globe (Fuller and Harford, 2016, p. 1). Embarking on my PhD, I found myself confronted by the anxiety that I had nothing novel or of value to add to the intellectual conversation. This immobilising thought manifested itself in a reluctance to write or make my thoughts public. As my PhD progressed, however, I came to view writing, thinking and sense-making as intrinsically linked. I saw writing as a vehicle through which literature, findings and ideas can be explored and understood. Relatedly, my PhD experience has taught me to experiment with my writing, and embrace different writing styles. For instance, I initially found the idea of poetic representation to be both risky and incongruent with my preconceptions as to what should be included in a doctoral thesis. Yet, as I started to investigate the technique, I found poetic representation

to be a creative solution to the problem of how best to honour to my participants' words and voices.

The steps involved in conducting a qualitative research project can appear linear and straightforward on paper. Indeed, as a novice researcher, I found Smith et al.'s (2009) guidelines and advice on how to conduct an IPA study reassuring. Yet, when I came to collect and analyse my data, I was confronted with the inevitable messiness inherent in doing social research. I found these activities to be non-linear and iterative, often requiring a great deal of rethinking and redoing. For instance, I found myself restarting the data analysis process after attending an IPA workshop and speaking to researchers who had used the methodology themselves. It was during these activities that I came to realise that far from being a rigid recipe, Smith et al.'s guidelines offer researchers the freedom to navigate their unique own way through the research process and adapt should the data or project require it. While getting to grips with the overwhelming yet rich data I had collected as well as my chosen analytic approach, I grew in confidence and came to value the malleable, cyclical and 'messy' nature of the methodology I had chosen. This meant that I could go back through my data to amend and confirm my understanding as well as assess the strength of my interpretations. Like Smith et al. (2009) point out, I came to see IPA not as a series of ordered and rigid steps but as "an approach and sensibility, as much a way of thinking about and seeing, as of doing something" (p. 81).

While designing my study, I anticipated learning a great deal about other people's careers, and the particularities of their professional decision-making. I did not anticipate the effect that my participants' stories would have on the ways in which I thought about my own career to date. While analysing their stories, I found it comforting to know that others' careers were not linear and neatly formulated. Likewise, it was reassuring that, despite their seniority, the women who took part in this study expressed anxieties that were reminiscent of my own. Through the lens of their narratives, I was able to reflect on and make sense of my own career history and the professional decisions that I have made to date. In exploring individuals' subjective experiences, then, I discovered the power of narrative and

the capacity that individuals' life stories have to elucidate more general issues and concerns.

Throughout my doctoral journey, I found myself having to adapt and cultivate a new strand of my professional identity. I found that my 'research student self' required different qualities and characteristics to those that had defined my 'teacher self'. The persona I adopted in the secondary school classroom was founded, to a certain extent, on 'knowing' and dealing with the 'facts' of the curriculum, assessment procedures and school policies that defined my work. Yet, while working towards the completion of my PhD, it was necessary to open myself up to doubt and uncertainty. I was required to shine a spotlight on my preconceptions and adopt a critical, questioning approach to what I thought I knew about our education system. This has involved evaluating and synthesising new information, theories and ideas. In cultivating this new identity strand, I have also had to navigate and make sense of academic conventions, lexicon and expectations. This has been a complex process and I perceive my 'researcher self' to be a work in progress. This learning experience has, however, given me the confidence to continue to learn and develop my own way forward as an independent researcher.

Conclusion

When compared to the proliferation of studies concerned with headteachers' lives and experiences, the perceptions, motivations and aspirations of deputy headteachers have received little academic attention (Harris et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2009). This means that as a research community we have only a partial understanding of deputy headship and the individuals who enact this role. Van Manen (1990) writes:

The point of phenomenological research is to "borrow" other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experiences, in the context of the whole of human experience (p. 62).

In exploring my participants' career histories and occupational aspirations, I aimed to better our understanding of this professional group. Like Coleman (2002), I hoped that writing "from the viewpoint of gender would be useful to men as well as women" (p. 12). I also hoped to gain novel insights into the nuances, complexities and idiosyncrasies of the ways in which individual deputies perceive secondary headship. This study has gone some way in furthering our understanding of women deputies' career histories and professional aspirations. There is, however, more work to be done. Women's under-representation in secondary headship is a highly complex, ongoing issue that does not lend itself to 'one size fits all' solutions or quick fixes. It continues to be researched and written about because of its complexity and the detrimental repercussions gender inequity has on young people, our education system and society at large. As an academic community, it is essential that we keep questioning and chipping away at the gendered nature of educational leadership. In a very small way, I hope this thesis has contributed to this endeavour. I conclude by restating the key findings and messages that have emerged from this study. I hope these points can act as a springboard for future reflection, discussion and research focused on the lived experiences, perceptions and motivations of individual women deputies.

Key findings and messages

- As opposed to a homogeneous group, individual women deputy headteachers perceive and experience their careers in secondary education very differently. Their career narratives and trajectories are multifaceted and laced with idiosyncrasies.
- Individual women demonstrate different 'stances' towards the constraining and enabling influences they encounter on their career journeys, as well as those they anticipate encountering in the future. The women who took part in this study described carefully negotiating and positioning themselves towards the constraints and affordances of their professional and personal lives in ways that could be characterised as autonomous, meta-reflexive or communicative (Archer, 2003, 2007, 2012).
- Potential aspirants' perceptions of secondary headship are complex, multi-layered and often contradictory. All of the women who took part in

this study perceived headship to be laced with precarity; they viewed the position as posing a risk to their occupational stability and reputation. Nevertheless, eight participants' belief in the power of headship to make a meaningful difference was enough to encourage them to aspire towards headship regardless of the disincentives they perceived as being ingrained within the headteacher role.

- Career decision-making has both an affective and cognitive dimension. My participants perceived the decision as to whether or not to aspire towards and ultimately step up to headship as having an impact on both their professional and personal lives. The juxtaposition between the women's awareness that their future professional selves required careful consideration and the 'greedy' nature of their deputy headteacher lives was striking. The women deputies' narratives suggested they needed more time and space to critically consider their occupational futures, and formulate a workable image of their future professional selves.
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and poetic representation facilitate the exploration of the idiosyncrasies, nuances and complexities of individual women leaders' lived experiences in the teaching profession. The field of gender and educational leadership may benefit from adding both approaches to its existing methodological toolkit.
- The career narratives of individual women deputy headteachers, as potential aspirants to headship, provide an alternative perspective on the affordances and disincentives of secondary headship. The career histories and perceptions of women deputies deserve a prominent place in our ongoing investigations into the under-representation of women in educational leadership.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Literature review search strategy

<p>Search Terms (these were searched for singularly, and grouped together with Boolean operators e.g. and, not, or)</p>	<p>administration/ agency/ aspirants/ aspirations/ assistant principal/ barrier(s)/ career/ career advancement/ career aspirations/ career decision-making/ career experiences/ career histories/ career narratives/ career progression/ career stories/ career trajectories/ choice(s)/ constraint(s)/ depute(s)/ deputies/ deputy head/ deputy headteacher/ deputy principal/ educational administration/ educational leadership/ employment/ enable(rs)/ equality/ female/ feminine/ femininities/ feminism/ feminist/ gender/ gender equality/ gender inequality/ headship/ non-aspirant/ occupation/ preference(s)/ principalship/ professional aspirations/ school leadership/ school management/ secondary school/ secondary school headteacher(s)/ secondary school principal(s)/ secondary school teacher/ sex/ teachers' lives/ teachers' work/ under-representation/ vice principal/ woman/ women</p>
<p>Format</p>	<p>Books, monographs, journal articles, electronic articles, newspaper articles, conference papers, conference proceedings, theses, official, governmental and legal documentation.</p>
<p>Language</p>	<p>English</p>

Appendix 2: A selection of IPA studies in Education

Authors	Journal	Phenomenon	Sample Size	Data Collection
Denovan, A. and Macaskill, A. (2013)	British Educational Research Journal	The experience of transition in first year undergraduates	10	Individual semi-structured interviews
Huws, J. and Jones, R. (2015)	Autism	Young people's perceptions of autism	9	Individual semi-structured interviews
Klockare, E., Gustafsson, H. and Nordin – Bates, S. (2011)	Research in Dance Education	How dance teachers use psychological skills in dance classes	6	Individual semi-structured interviews
Borisov, C. and Reid, G. (2010)	European Journal of Special Needs Education	The benefits of adolescents with an intellectual disability functioning as tutors	5	Field observations; Video recordings; Pictures from student cameras; Individual semi-structured interviews

Appendix 3: University of Leicester ethics review sign off document



To: **L GUIHEN**

Subject: Ethical Application Ref: **llg5-b9c4**

(Please quote this ref on all correspondence)

14/02/2014 12:41:43

School of Education

Project Title: **The Career Histories and Professional Aspirations of Women Deputy Headteachers: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Thank you for submitting your application which has been considered.

This study has been given ethical approval, subject to any conditions quoted in the attached notes.

Any significant departure from the programme of research as outlined in the application for research ethics approval (such as changes in methodological approach, large delays in commencement of research, additional forms of data collection or major expansions in sample size) must be reported to your Departmental Research Ethics Officer.

Approval is given on the understanding that the University Research Ethics Code of Practice and other research ethics guidelines and protocols will be compiled with

- <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>
- <http://www.le.ac.uk/safety/>

The following is a record of correspondence notes from your application **llg5-b9c4**. Please ensure that any proviso notes have been adhered to:-

--- END OF NOTES ---

Appendix 4: Reflexive journal extracts

October 2013 – My Research Topic

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) during my first year as an English teacher were highly influential. It was a male dominated team, and somehow they gave the impression that you had to be “tough” to be an effective leader. I wondered where my career in education would go and, as I looked up towards the senior and middle leaders in my school, I saw no one I could imagine being. I saw that masculinity dominated in the school I worked in. It all felt very action oriented with little room for empathy or reflection. I wondered whether people ‘like me’ (i.e. female and relatively quiet) advanced in this profession. I really cared about my students’ beliefs and attitudes, and I started to wonder what messages they were receiving about leadership and management in our society. Was a male dominated SLT telling girls (and me, as a young teacher) that leadership isn’t for them?

I came across the school workforce statistics produced by the Department for Education as I was putting together my PhD proposal. I was motivated by a sense of injustice while looking at the gendered nature of secondary school leadership; why are there still glaringly obvious gender issues like this in our society? Isn’t ‘the glass ceiling’ supposed to be a relic of the 1980s?

July 2014 – Transcribing Faye’s Interview

I am transcribing Faye’s interview at the moment and I’m finding that listening to this interview again is giving me a lot to think about. I am wondering about my role as a researcher. How empathic should I be as a researcher? Faye’s story, and her telling of it, was clearly emotive. I don’t feel that I pushed her to share painful details with me, but I worry that I left her at the end of the interview having ‘captured’ her story but given her very little in return. One of the participants I interviewed said they found it thought provoking to reflect on their career. I wonder if Faye felt the same. Was this research interview one-sided, or did Faye get anything out of sharing her experiences? I wonder how she saw our interaction.

I’ve noticed in previous interviews that I have a tendency to fear silence and jump in to fill it. There doesn’t seem to be any instances of this in this recording which I believe to be an improvement. I have noticed however that I have quite a few ‘comfort words’ that I use during interview situations. ‘Sort of’ and ‘yeah’ appear to be the main culprits. I need to watch out for this if I’m going to improve my interviewing technique.

March 2015 – Using IPA

I feel more confident about IPA after attending the London IPA training. I’m going to start analysing my data on Monday. Before attending I was worried about the data that I had collected. Many of the women imposed a time limit on their interviews and I suppose this led to concerns that my interviews were not long enough for an IPA study. During the course, however, I came to realise that the quality of the interviews is more important than the length of the interview interaction. My sample were articulate, educated and clearly used to reflecting

on their experiences. It is however interesting that the women were so pushed for time and, this in itself, might tell me something about the current educational culture in England. I felt that all of them were coming from something, and going to something else with little time to spare. They had however been able to squeeze me in and I am really grateful for that. I hope my analysis does justice to their stories.

August 2015 – Reflecting On My Findings

Having read research concerned with women in educational leadership, I think, in some ways, I was expecting instances of constraint to come out of the data. I reflected on this fore-understanding before I started my analysis, and tried to remain open to the data. I do however feel it is worth coming back to this here. While there is an element of constraint in the data as a whole, my analysis also appears to have revealed a degree of agency, freedom and individualism; the language of choice is definitely present in the women's narratives. I suppose this is an example of the hermeneutic circle in action. I am wondering how structure and agency, constraint and freedom, coexist for my participants and how I could theorise this in my thesis?

Appendix 5: Pilot project

Overview

My pilot project consisted of individual, face-to-face interviews with three women participants: a senior vice principal (Participant 1), a newly appointed deputy headteacher (Participant 2) and an executive assistant principal (Participant 3). All three participants worked in one borough of the English West Midlands at the time of interview (January – February, 2014). All of the interviews were conducted and analysed in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (2011) and The University of Leicester. In the interests of anonymity, the names of the participants who took part in the pilot study have been omitted from this thesis.

The Interviews

The interview schedule below framed and gave a structure to all three interviews during my pilot study. After asking permission, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed to aid analysis.

The Past: Career Milestones and Family/ Home Commitments

1. What have been the major milestones in your teaching career to date? What did each event mean for you?
2. Were there any mentors/ role models that encouraged you to aspire towards promotion? Can you tell me about them?
3. How compatible has your career in teaching been with your home life or life outside work?

The Present: Life as a Deputy Headteacher

4. What does a 'typical day' as a deputy headteacher in your school consist of?
5. What is the most satisfying part of your job?
6. What is the least satisfying part of your job?

The Future: Future Professional Selves and Headship

7. In terms of your career, where do you see yourself in three years?
8. Do you see yourself becoming a headteacher? Why? Why not?
9. What has led you to see headship in this way? What have been the major influences on how you view headship?

Initial Findings

Theme	Illustrative Quotations
Unexpected Promotions and Milestones	"There was a change in leadership in English so they asked me to move over to be Head of English ... I joined the senior team" (Participant 2) Participant 3 stated that her pathway to promotion began "when my head of department moved on quicker than I'd expected"

The Importance of Professional Relationships	<p>Participant 2 remarked that she “came from a school where it didn’t really matter what age you were, time served wasn’t important. It was very much if you were up for doing something different and you were quite good at it then you would be given opportunities.”</p> <p>Participant 3 stated “the climate I have been in has empowered me more than anything really”.</p> <p>Participant 1 remarked that “if you experience really good leadership it really inspires you.”</p>
Work-Life Balance	<p>“I think there’s a mythology around it. I really do. My social circle does not include teachers which is really helpful. So, therefore you get a real insight into the demands of other professions and I don’t think that people experience different demands because looking at say my contemporaries and the demands that are placed upon them they are very, very similar if not even more excessive” (Participant 1)</p> <p>Participant 2 explicitly stated that work and her home life are “not compatible, it makes life very difficult”.</p> <p>Participant 3 remarked “you can be wracked with guilt about the whole thing but during school holidays I get quite a bit of time with the children ... I hope that compensates a little”.</p>
The Nature of the Deputy Role: Meetings and Teaching	<p>When asked about a ‘typical day’, participants remarked “meetings dominate, but productive ones” (Participant 1), “the day is very much on the whole reactive” (Participant 2) and “whichever school I’m at, it is basically involves leadership meetings, line management meetings” (Participant 3).</p>
Aspirations towards Headship	<p>Both Participant 1 and 2 remarked that it is the challenge that the headteacher role affords that appeals to them. Participant 2 remarked that “I really enjoy the learning aspect of all the different jobs that I have had. I mean there’s always a massive learning curve, it always takes me out of my comfort zone and weirdly I enjoy that”. The challenge of creating a vision and determining the direction that the school in which they work will go was also deemed to be appealing. On being asked what it is about the role that appeals to her, Participant 1 remarked that “it is the ultimate responsibility for vision”. Participant 3 also mentioned that the responsibility for decision-making that headship offered was appealing.</p>

	She reported being motivated by “knowing that great decisions can make a big difference and admiring the people I have seen in those positions above me”.
Teaching is Still Important	Participant 1 remarked that continuing to teach “is really helpful to keep that connection”, and Participant 2 stated “I still teach a little bit. Four hours a week, that is really important to me”. Likewise, Participant 3 stated “I do teach so I don’t teach a lot but I do still teach my subject When I do teach now it is like the treat of the day”.

Reflections

The opportunity to conduct a pilot study helped me to reflect on my research design, sample population and interviewing technique. Some of the reflections I had while setting up, conducting and starting to analyse the pilot interviews are reproduced below.

General Thoughts

One of the things I noticed about my research design and interview schedule when interviewing participants was the way I seemed to race through the interview questions. Although each interview covered all of the topic areas I planned to explore, the interviews took about twenty minutes which was significantly less than the hour I initially intended each interview to take. This has highlighted the need to include more prompts and probing questions into my interview schedule. While interviewing participants, I also noticed a reluctance on the part of participants to speak about their home lives until later on in the interview when they felt slightly more comfortable talking to me and being recorded. I wonder whether I need to spend more time building rapport due to the sensitive nature of issues that may arise. A number of the answers given had clearly been formulated and thought about throughout the careers of the women interviewed.

The Sample

Before embarking upon my pilot study, I underestimated the demands that are placed on deputy headteachers’ time. Throughout my pilot study, I contacted six deputy headteachers. One did not reply to my invitation to get involved in the study and two refused to take part due the fact they were busy with examinations and Ofsted preparations (inspectors were known to be in the local area at that time). These difficulties led me to question whether the summer term may be a better time to arrange interviews and, if so, how practical it will be for me to be in a position to collect my data during the months of June and July. In my pilot study outline, I stated I would use a purposive sampling method. Yet in practice a ‘snowball’ sampling technique was used as I relied on the recommendations and suggestions of those I have previously worked with. During my main PhD study, I will need to interview twelve deputy headteachers in depth and therefore my sampling methods and ways of finding willing participants needs much more consideration.

Qualitative Interviewing

While transcribing, I found myself wanting to know more and wishing I had probed certain issues further. In future interviews therefore I need the confidence to ask for more information as well as greater flexibility to skip or add in questions depending on the issues raised during discussion. Another issue that I think warrants further reflection is that of the researcher-researched relationship. I had encountered the women I interviewed as part of this pilot project at certain points either throughout my own schooling or during my time as a secondary school English teacher. At some points during the interviews, I perceived them to be more senior to me and I think this had some impact on my willingness to ask participants to elaborate on their answers. Further reflection on my position as a researcher and the type of working relationship I wish to foster with participants is therefore needed.

Appendix 6: Interview schedule

The Past: Career Milestones and Family/ Home Commitments

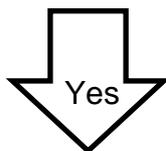
1. What have been the major milestones in your teaching career to date?
2. What have been the major influences on your career development or decisions?
 - Are there any colleagues that have encouraged you to aspire towards promotion?
 - Are there people outside of work who have influenced you?
3. How compatible has your career in teaching been with your home life or life outside work?

The Present: Life as a Deputy Headteacher

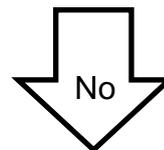
4. What responsibilities do you have or have you had as a deputy headteacher?
5. What is the most satisfying part of your job?
6. What is the least satisfying part of your job?
7. Do you present a particular image of yourself professionally?
8. How does the type of school (e.g. academy, community school) you work at impact on your work?
9. What impact does Ofsted have on the work you do as a deputy headteacher?

The Future: Future Professional Selves and Headship

10. In terms of your career, where do you see yourself in three years?
11. Do you see yourself becoming a headteacher?



12. What is it about the Headteacher role that appeals to you?
13. What sort of school do you see yourself leading?
14. How has being a deputy headteacher prepared you for headship?
15. What advice would you give a woman teacher who aspired towards headship?



12. What is it about the Headteacher role that does not appeal to you?
13. How would headship have to change in order to attract you?
14. Do you think deputy headship prepares people for headship?
15. What advice would you give a woman teacher who aspired towards headship?

Appendix 7: Letter to participants



School of Education

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162-166 Upper New Walk
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Tel: +44 (0) 116 229 7514
Fax: +44 (0) 116 229 7501

Director
Professor Janet Ainley
21, University Road,
Leicester, LE1 7RF, UK

Dear [INSERT PARTICIPANT NAME]

THE PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN DEPUTY HEADTEACHERS

My name is Laura Guihen and I am currently doing a PhD in Education at The University of Leicester. As part of my doctoral studies, I am undertaking a research project which aims to investigate the professional aspirations of women deputy headteachers working in English secondary schools. I was wondering if you would be willing to be interviewed as part of my research at a time and place convenient to you.

Throughout the project I hope to explore the career histories and work of women deputy headteachers as well as their professional aspirations. The rationale for this study focuses on the relative lack of women in secondary headship.

Before agreeing to be interviewed, I can confirm that:

- With your consent, the interview will be recorded and transcribed.
- Your anonymity will be maintained at all times and no comments will be ascribed to you by name in any written document or verbal presentation.
- You will be free to withdraw from the research at any time and/or request that your transcript not be used.
- All of the data collected throughout the project will be used for the purpose of this research project only and be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

I sincerely hope that you will be able to help me with my research. If you are happy to be involved, please email me at llg5@le.ac.uk with your availability for interview. Should you have any queries concerning the nature of the research or are unclear about the extent of your involvement in it please contact me. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to your reply.

Appendix 8: Participant consent form

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information provided in Laura's letter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project, and I understand that taking part will include being interviewed and my voice recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that all data will be treated as personal under the 1998 Data Protection Act, and will be stored securely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my words may be quoted but my name, place of work etc. will be anonymised in the resulting thesis and any other reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant [printed]	Signature	Date
Laura Guihen [printed]	Signature	Date

Appendix 9: Context questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. Please complete the following context questionnaire before we begin.

1. Which age group do you belong to?

- Under 30 30 – 35 36 - 40 41 – 45
- 46 – 50 51 – 55 56 - 60 61+

2. Do you have any children?

- No Yes - How many?

3. Which of the following applies to you?

- Single Living with partner Married Separated
- Divorced Widowed

4. How long have you been a deputy headteacher?

- Less than 1 year 1 – 5 years 6 – 10 years 11 years +

5. Would you like to be a headteacher at some point in your career?

- Yes Maybe No Don't Know

Thank you for taking the time to complete this context questionnaire. Your answers are very much appreciated.

Appendix 10: *Initial exploratory coding*

These questions have been adapted from a series of exploratory coding questions supplied by Dr Kate Hefferon and Dr Elena Gil-Rodriguez, London IPA Training, March 2015.

Stage	Questions asked of the data
Descriptive	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What career experiences are being claimed by the participant?2. What personal experiences are being claimed by the participant?3. What appear to be the most important characteristics of the participant's experiences?
Linguistic	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Has the participant used any phrases or words that stand out? What do they mean?2. Are specific phrases, words or sentences repeated? Why do you think this is?3. Has the participant used any similes, metaphors or analogies? What do they appear to mean?4. Has the participant used any terminology, phrases or jargon specific to teaching or Education more generally? If so, what do these appear to mean to the participant?5. Is there anything noteworthy about the pronouns, expressions and tenses that the participant is using? What do these appear to mean?
Conceptual	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What events or experiences are especially salient for this participant? Why do you think this is?2. How has this participant made sense of this particular career experience? What does it mean to them?3. How has this participant made sense of this particular personal experience? What does it mean to them?4. What is the significance of this?5. Is anything missing?

Appendix 11: Extract from an annotated transcript (Faye)

Emergent Themes	Transcript (Faye)	Exploratory Coding
<p>Experience as meaningful</p> <p>values career</p> <p>Teaching as caring</p> <p>colleagues as meaningful</p> <p>female role models</p>	<p>1. L.G: So the first question I have, is what have been the major milestones in your teaching career to date?</p> <p>3. Faye: Being asked to be vice principal. That was a wonderful recognition of my time at school. Writing my first timetable, as I'm a timetabler. It was for a two site school, so managing to do that when I'd been thrown in the deep end because the lady that was supposed to be doing it went off sick. So, I was asked whether I would do it and I said yes so that was a major milestone because it was something that memorable I'd not done before. Probably my very first promotion when I was made head of year way back when. That was another good day as well.</p> <p>13. L.G: What have been the major influences on your career development or decisions?</p> <p>15. Faye: A lady who was deputy head at the time, they weren't principals then, the deputy head at the school I'm at now. I just wanted to be like her. She was like the mother hen of the school, she looked after everybody and everything. She was just marvellous when I was a new young teacher and I just wanted to be like her. I definitely</p>	<p>Does this expose a need for recognition? A belief that she deserves something for her experience of dedication? A sense of time implies a lengthy service. Perceives promotion as a reward period for experience of dedication to her role.</p> <p>So an identity. Faye's role seems close to her sense of self: a vibrant act. Learning by doing. opportunity on serendipitous. Meaningful events: completing a timetable & being promoted to HOD.</p> <p>Lack of activity: all opportunities are given, not fought.</p> <p>Activities - 1st time as meaningful. clearly values career & what this means about herself.</p> <p>Day: short period of time. Does this imply that the rest of her time hasn't been so 'good'.</p> <p>Attention achieved/a sense of completion.</p> <p>Link at educational change/ her shifted focus on other person. Language implies she sees this as a small episode in the life of being 'like' her seems really important experience</p> <p>female role model. An all encompassing role: a charge of all. caring & nurturing approach to work. A career defined by another? Guiding the construction of a professional identity.</p> <p>The experience of wanting to be like somebody else values traits (care, maternal feeling) over managerial actions.</p>
	<p>A long term ambition/ 'teacher' has a sense of been removed.</p> <p>The word 'teacher' has been removed.</p> <p>Page 1 of Faye's Transcript</p>	

Appendix 12: Super-ordinate and subordinate themes for one participant (Faye)

Super-ordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Illustrative Quotes
The visceral and psychological repercussions of change	Alienation and pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Pushed aside” and “not wanted” (Pg 9, line 179). ▪ Ofsted: “it’s moving the goal posts. You train for something, the 100m sprint let’s say and you know the best time in the world is 9 point something seconds. So, you’ve trained and trained and trained to hit that time and then the week you are due to run your race somebody does it a whole second faster. So, now what can you do? You can’t possibly do that or improve that much in such a short period of time. But, the idea that we’ll just change the way that we are going to measure everybody and we’re going to come and look at you and then we’re going to say ‘well, actually you’re just rubbish” (Pg 10, line 197 – 207). ▪ “Like being ripped to pieces ... it was the most horrendous day of my career” (Pg 11, line 210 – 221). ▪ “It’s odd to me” (Pg 20, line 404).
	Identity crossroads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “That’s going to be a steep learning curve for me ... I need to learn to say actually ... you’ll have to find somebody else to do it” (Pg 16, line 331 – 335). ▪ “I know colleagues who have gone on to be heads. That would have been an avenue that I would have followed” (Pg 19, line 395 – 398).
	Feeling rejected and undervalued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “That’s what my big crisis is at the moment because my new head doesn’t see a need for that, or somebody that has an overarching view of the whole school” (Pg 2, line 21 – 24). ▪ “I’ve had all my roles striped off me” (Pg 6, line 107).

Others and occupation as central to identity and well-being	Teaching as identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I have a wealth of experience” (Pg 8, line 155). ▪ “It’s in the blood if you’re a people person it doesn’t matter if they are six, thirty six or fifty six, if you can bring out the best in people that will suit me, that will do me” (Pg 15, line 308 – 311).
	Positive relationships and influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I am one of the most respected and loved members of the staff in the place because I just get on with everything” (Pg 8 – 9, line 167 – 169). ▪ “There’s never a week that goes by when I don’t get a little card or a bottle of wine or a thank you or just a sign of appreciation from people for what I’ve done for them” (Pg 9, line 171 – 174). ▪ “I’ve got an excellent way with people and excellent way with those youngsters and staff” (Pg 16, line 322 – 324). ▪ “I spend so many hours at school, a part of my whole life and sanity is the people at school ... I know everybody and everybody knows me. Part of my social life is school ... it’ll say the name of our school running through my veins” (Pg 17, line 340 – 345). ▪ “I like to be in the mix” (Pg 18, line 360). ▪ “I used to say if people regard me the same as I regard her then that will be me happy in my career – that’s exactly where I feel I have got to. So, objective achieved really” (Pg 18, line 367 – 370).
	Care and consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I just wanted to be like her. She was like the mother hen of the school, she looked after everybody and everything. She was just marvellous when I was a new young teacher and I just wanted to be like her” (Pg 1, line 17 – 20). ▪ “We used to be able to care for each other and look after each other but I think that is slipping now” (Pg 10,

<p>The experience of being left behind</p>	<p>Rapid and imposed changes</p>	<p>line 189 – 191).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I wouldn’t like to be a young teacher and a young mum in teaching now because I think the demands on everybody’s time are far more” (Pg 3, line 46 – 49). ▪ “We now call it ‘takeaway homework’ – in terms of planners, making sure all of the houses – we have houses rather than year groups now” (Pg 4, line 81 – 83). ▪ “He has been replaced by a young man who is, I don’t know whether you know of the company Future Leaders, he’s a bright young thing with very little overarching school experience” (Pg 5, line 96 – 99). ▪ “I just think its narrow minded that the profession as a whole seems to have become quite ageist ... I don’t feel that I am at the twilight of my career ... I’m not on the scrapheap just yet” (Pg 7, line 127 – 133). ▪ “It is all do it rapid, quick, change it, move on and go to the next school ... The stability of a school is its staff and you don’t have this constant chopping and changing; change this, change that. It’s just not particularly healthy in my opinion” (Pg 7 - 8, line 140 – 147). ▪ “I think there’s a lot of the human side going out of teachers and I think that’s because of the situation we are all in because everyone is under so much pressure under the cosh of Ofsted and all the target setting and you’ve got to do this, that and the other. This percentage and that percentage. I do think that the human side is being taken away” (Pg 9 – 10, line 183 – 189). ▪ “I think really now it is a business man’s job almost, rather than a teacher’s job” (Pg 18, line 374 – 376). ▪ “Educational consultants oh my word make your eyes water the amount they are getting paid. They
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		<p>are getting paid an awful lot of money, and then they are also paying out a lot again for experts to come in and tell us how to do things. It's like paying twice if you like. That's another area which has changed a lot over my time" (Pg 20, line 408 – 414).</p>
	<p>There is no place for me: the homogeneity of leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "He doesn't want me doing any of the jobs I've been doing up to now and effectively because, I feel, 1) I'm not a Future Leader and 2) because I am not a man. He is surrounding himself by men, I've no proof of that and that's the perception. He is choosing to ignore my experience" (Pg 6, line 109 – 114).
	<p>Being critical of and resisting the 'new order'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "I am not averse to saying what I think" (Pg 8, line 166). ▪ "The new regime ... I'm not interested" (Pg 15, line 312 – 314).

Appendix 13: Super-ordinate and subordinate themes for all participants

Participant Name	Super-ordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
Alice	The perception of self as strategist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actively managing self in the workplace ▪ Creating opportunities and professional networks ▪ Career planning and 'fit'
	The desire for more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The constraints, pressures and isolation of deputy headship ▪ The opportunities of headship ▪ The possession of the 'correct' leadership attributes and experiences
	Making sense of having both children and leadership aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Husband - wife partnership ▪ Professional sacrifices ▪ Childrearing as a threat to career
Beth	Perceptions and expectations of women leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gendered expectations at work and home ▪ Consciously aware of being a woman in teaching ▪ The importance of women in leadership
	Feeling threatened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The binary or tension between self and culture ▪ Change and the future as causing doubt and insecurity ▪ Feeling constrained and limited ▪ The difficulty or psychological impact of being a deputy headteacher
	Catalysts and driving forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Values as guiding and inspiring ▪ The desire for more
Caitlin	Meaningful components of identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Values as a guide and key part of identity ▪ Internally motivated to learn and succeed ▪ The value of timing, planning and experience

	Feelings of frustration and anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The power of Ofsted to judge and learning to lead ▪ The experience of constraint ▪ Anxiety and tension regarding the future
	The management and pressures of work and home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Career as bound up with and reliant on husband's choices ▪ Work as perceived as intense and time consuming ▪ The transition from assistant to deputy headship as difficult
Dawn	Internal drivers and motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Values and the desire to make a difference ▪ Career as central to identity ▪ Confidence and competence
	Sources of conflict and tension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The conflict between career and having children ▪ Conformity and resistance ▪ Conflict between self and educational culture
	Balancing constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pressure of job role ▪ Pressure of time ▪ Looking forwards
Faye	The visceral and psychological repercussions of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alienation and pain ▪ Identity crossroads ▪ Feeling rejected and undervalued
	Others and occupation as central to identity and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching as identity ▪ Positive relationships and influences ▪ Care and consideration
	The experience of being left behind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rapid and imposed changes ▪ There is no place for me: the homogeneity of leadership ▪ Being critical of and resisting the 'new order'
Jennifer	Relationships as enabling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship with headteacher(s) ▪ The value of support and encouragement from

		<p>others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The importance of relationships and networks
	Constraints and limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anxiety around time, timing and ageing ▪ Confidence and gender issues ▪ Guilt and sacrificing work for children
	Aspiring and looking forwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A desire for more and positioning oneself for headship ▪ The constraints of deputy headship ▪ A desire to make a difference
Katherine	Contextual considerations and the role of the headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good vs. poor leadership ▪ School 'fit' and culture ▪ Professional identities and homogeneity
	Support and motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Husband - wife partnership and support from home ▪ Enabling professional relationships ▪ The desire to lead and be strategic
	The emotional dimensions of teaching and leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child-centred values, inclusivity and the desire to make a difference ▪ Confidence and resilience ▪ "Switching off" and the emotional costs of working in schools
Lorraine	Motivation and social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A holistic view of the child and his/her community ▪ A desire to make a difference on a social level ▪ Social context and 'fit'
	Self-belief and agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confidence, perfectionism and self-belief ▪ Agency and actively controlling work-life balance ▪ A desire for more control
	Watching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparation and experience as everything ▪ Headteacher role models ▪ Actively seeking out learning opportunities

Madeline	Drivers and motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Networks, relationships and role models ▪ Pursuing social justice ▪ Being inspired and inspirational
	Questions, tensions and concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Job sustainability ▪ Emotional and physical wear and tear ▪ Having children
	Uncertain future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Desire for change and the fear of stagnation ▪ The downsides of headship ▪ What do I want to be?
Naomi	Work is who I am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The impossibility of work - home balance ▪ Work as number 1 priority ▪ Role as all consuming
	Drive and a wider sense of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Driven by morals, values and purpose ▪ Challenging school environments and the choice to work in them ▪ More than simply a job
	Feeling challenged and vulnerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational policy as alienating and confusing ▪ A precarious headship ▪ The tension between values and educational policy
Sharon	An uncertain future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anxiety regarding headship ▪ The fear of stagnation and the value of headship ▪ The costs of leadership and "greedy work"
	Confidence, self-doubt and belief in oneself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeling uncertain and the gendered dimensions of confidence ▪ Confidence boosters and the value of others ▪ The need for confidence
	Striking a balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching and leading ▪ Home life and career postponement ▪ Educational landscape and values

Sophie	"Greedy work" in a performative culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The risks of headship ▪ Policy changes and external influences ▪ Committing to and prioritising work
	Motivating factors and the appeal of headship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes, impact and improvement ▪ Values, morals and wanting to make a difference ▪ The desire for more than deputy headship
	Professional relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Loneliness, isolation and difficult decisions ▪ The importance of networks ▪ The value of influential others and learning by watching

Appendix 14: Super-ordinate and subordinate themes across cases

Super-ordinate Theme 1: Managing constraint	
<i>Subordinate Themes</i>	<i>Illustrative Quotes</i>
Negotiating professional and caring responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I’m here at half seven, balancing that with kids and husband and everything else is difficult” (Sharon, Pg 6, line 105 – 107). ▪ “The reason I am here is because of a very personal decision that myself and my husband made about 16 years ago when we decided it was time to have children” (Alice, Pg 3 - 4, line 62 – 64). ▪ “My teaching career has been stifled somewhat by commitments which is what I think happens with women” (Jennifer, Pg 2, line 35 – 37). ▪ “I wouldn’t like to be a young teacher and a young mum in teaching now because I think the demands on everybody’s time are far more” (Faye, Pg 3, line 46 – 49).
Meeting the challenges of deputy headship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Also the not always being available to teach your class because other things become more important I think that’s a really hard balance” (Naomi, Pg 7, line 139 – 141). ▪ “I’ve realised quite how much a lonely job it is, being, um, a deputy, one of two deputies working with a head. You know, it’s, I can discuss a lot of my strategies, like my, um, procedures, my systems with other people who are in a more junior position than me. But some of the ((slight pause)) the values-driven stuff, I have to be quite careful about, so, it can be quite lonely” (Sophie, Pg 22, line 451 – 458).
Balancing work and well – being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “It’s just having the energy to keep going” (Dawn, Pg 10, line 209). ▪ “My life comes to a bit of a halt during term time ... I don’t have any energy to ((laughing)) see, or talk to anyone during the week” (Caitlin, Pg 6, line 106 – 110). ▪ “I’m not very good at relaxing. I genuinely don’t know what to do. I had a day once where I didn’t really have anything to do and I just watched a whole season of Gray’s Anatomy and I just felt so guilty” (Katherine, Pg 9, line 178 – 182).

Super-ordinate Theme 2: Motivating forces	
<i>Subordinate Themes</i>	<i>Illustrative Quotes</i>
Influential others and worthwhile learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “She was really inspirational. I’d sit and watch her do assemblies and I’d sit and see how she was with the kids and I’d think, ‘Yeah I want to be like you’” (Sharon, Pg 4, line 72 – 74). ▪ “I just wanted to be like her. She was like the mother hen of the school, she looked after everybody and everything. She was just marvellous when I was a new young teacher and I just wanted to be like her” (Faye, Pg 1, line 17 – 20). ▪ “[Future Leaders is] life changing honestly ... I believe in the programme so much I had a three hour drive just to do that because what it’s done for me is absolutely amazing. So you must do it” (Madeline, Pg 28, Line 579 – 585).
Values and the desire for social justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “One of the things that I suppose I really like about my job is that it’s always, I always have to work with disadvantaged, struggling kids in low income areas so high levels of deprivation it’s kind of my motivation” (Beth, Pg 4, line 80 – 83). ▪ “We believe in an inclusive school” (Dawn, Pg 13, line 252). ▪ “Stick to your values and work out what it is that matters in education and be prepared to not compromise on that” (Naomi, Pg 20 – 21, line 418 – 420).
Super-ordinate Theme 3: Perceptions of secondary headship and the future	
<i>Subordinate Themes</i>	<i>Illustrative Quotes</i>
An opportunity for influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “There are lots of things that appeal. At the moment, I work as part of a team and I’d like to take that philosophy somewhere else. But, I think when you are a head you are ... at the end of the day you have autonomy over what is done and the decisions that are made” (Lorraine, Pg 15, line 309 – 313). ▪ “Increasingly, I look at ((slight pause)) how things could be done differently. And I want to be able to have the autonomy to make those decisions myself with my team. To get the right team around me so that we can affect change” (Sophie, Pg 19, line 390 – 394).

A poisoned chalice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Financial side of it, managing that budget, I can’t manage my own personal budget and then professionally you wonder whether you could do it, and I think you probably have to do it because otherwise you’d lose your job but I know that puts a lot of people off as well” (Madeline, Pg 24, line 483 - 487). ▪ “It’s a big risk” (Sophie, Pg 20, line 402). ▪ “I think really now it is a business man’s job almost, rather than a teacher’s job” (Faye, Pg 18, line 374 – 376).
Making a decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Right I mean if I could have everything in the world, I would love to be a head teacher. But practically (...) there aren’t that many opportunities in this area and there aren’t that many female head teachers either” (Beth, Pg 20 - 21, line 417 – 420) ▪ “I’ve left it so late, which is something I kick myself for” (Jennifer, Pg 24, line 492 – 493). ▪ “On a personal level I’m frightened because people around me telling me headship, well that’s all very well but at the moment I look at what my head’s in his first year, you’re on 24 hour call” (Madeline, Pg 19, Line 380 – 383).

The full master table can be viewed at the following link: <http://bit.ly/29v1vV3>

Appendix 15: An 'audit trail' for Caitlin's poetic representation

Please note that the words in bold are used in the poetic representation

Interview lines 35 – 45

I think I'm quite self-driven really, **I don't think I ever look at somebody and think 'Oh, I want to be like you.' I just want be the best at** ((slight pause)) **what I do**, really. I put a lot of pressure on myself, **I'm naturally very driven** and **I have very high expectations of myself**, so, I think **I'm my own** ((slight pause)) **worst critic** and I am constantly, y'know, have pressure on myself to do better and be better, and... So I don't think there is any one person, just think it's ((slight pause)) my determination really.

Interview lines 364 – 368

My husband is ((slight pause)) **is a stay-at-home dad, so that I can** ((slight pause)) **do the career thing**. Um, because he's not like that. So, it kind of has driven me even more to ((slight pause)) achieve my top goal really.

Interview lines 519 – 521

The choices we've made as a family, ((slight pause)) **have enabled me to succeed.**

Interview lines 92 – 97

I work really, really long hours, and **I don't see my children in the week** really. The time I, when I leave in the morning they're still asleep, when I get home at night ((slight pause)), **I'm lucky if I get there in time to read them a story**. So, it kinda makes up, **the holidays make up for that**.

Interview lines 24 – 26

And then I think obviously the biggest thing recently is **getting the job as deputy headteacher**, that's **has been very exciting**.

Interview lines 121 – 124

I'm responsible for ((slight pause)) assessment and reporting, timetabling, um, I'm responsible for ((slight pause)), like, **if the head's out I'm in charge**, basically.

Interview lines 176 – 181

Being with the children, oh I still teach as well by the way, um, being with the children, and ((slight pause)) **seeing them become better people is still** ((slight pause) **the best part of my job** really. And seeing things that you're implementing impact on them as people.

Interview lines 265 – 279

They're not easy children. Um, and, and, **they present a lot of challenges, but that's why I went into teaching.** If I wanted to ((slight pause)) work in lovely, y'know, schools that with **beautifully-behaved children** I wouldn't work in the types of schools that I do, I, y'know, these, this is why ((slight pause)) I'm doing my job really. Um, but equally, ((pause)) that means it's very, very challenging, ((slight pause)) um, and, it's exhausting really, and, and, ((slight pause)) y'know, **you're constantly battling** ((slight pause)) **low aspiration**, and yet the government pressure of you need to get these children the grades when their parents don't really care, and, y'know, it's, it's, it's harder than if I was **in a nice leafy** ((slight pause)) **private school** somewhere ((laughs)).

Interview lines 346 – 347

Headship? I just think **it'd be the best job in the world** really

Interview lines 357 – 358

My plan is to do it before I'm forty. So that gives me four years.

Interview lines 384 - 387

I would **lead a school like this.** I wouldn't go to a school that was outstanding. I would want to go to **one that** ((slight pause)) **needed** ((slight pause)) **turning around**, really.

Interview lines 433 – 440

Because it's not ((intake of breath)) **a nice place to be a head at the minute**, and ((slight pause)) I might get there in three years and think 'Actually, I don't ((slight pause)) I don't want to ...', y'know, 'I've got a mortgage to pay, **I don't want to** ((slight pause)) **walk into school one day and not have a job anymore.**' or whatever. Y'know, it's not a very nice climate.

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