Identity-portfolio-management:

A Data-led Research Study of

Organisational Entrant engagement in

Processes of Identity-creation and

Identity-management

James Brunton BA

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD in Psychology, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: _____   ID No.: <u>52163415</u>

<u>Date: 07-07-08</u>

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Abstract of the PhD Thesis

Identity-portfolio-management:

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This PhD dissertation examines the identity-creation and identity-management processes involved in an individual's entry into a new organisational context. This examination was achieved through the utilisation of a multi-method research design, with a quantitative component supporting the dominant qualitative component of the research study. The data collected from the participants, thirty-four first year mature students in two Irish Universities, was principally analysed utilising a discursive psychology analytic approach.

The principle research findings were that the participants managed their identity-structures (identity-portfolios) through two interrelated processes. They managed their identity-portfolios through both a management of overarching narratives, acutely relevant during the identity-creation process, and through their engagement in day to day identity-management processes. The degree of success with which a participant managed these processes impacted upon their decision whether or not to remain in university and determined the form of the new context-specific-identity, and ultimately their overall identity-portfolio.

This dissertation ultimately presents a model of identity-portfolio-management, based upon the research findings. This new model, grounded in participant data, adds to the existing literature by providing a new means of examining issues related to how individuals, in adulthood, manage their identity and offers a new perspective on how this process can be explained.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The process of conceptualising or categorising oneself as a woman, son, Buddhist, teacher, athlete etc. shapes how one thinks, feels and behaves in the world one perceives (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Investigating issues related to the make up of a human being's identity has been an ongoing activity amongst philosophers, theologians and scientists since the early days of scholastic activity (Bukobza, 2007), and is certainly regarded as one of the most important concepts currently under investigation in the social sciences (Cote and Levine, 2002). A keyword search using "identity" on PsychINFO yields 18,277 hits for peer reviewed material between 2000 and July 2008 alone. The increase in interest in identity-related concepts can also be seen in the number of journals, focusing in some way on identity, that have been formed in the last number of years, such as "*Identity*" and "*Self and Identity*".

A key reason for the current focus on identity related issues, and the importance of recognising the influence of certain contexts, for example family or work, on identity, may be the present state of Western culture (Cote and Levine, 2002). The importance of recognising that an individual's identity is affected by the sociohistorical context in which they exist is becoming ever clearer in a rapidly changing world. Recent cultural changes such as a marked decline in religious belief, increased rights for women, globalisation and the change from traditional careers to careers made up of project work and short-term employment have meant an increase in the degree of complexity involved in creating and maintaining one's identity (Baumesiter, 1987; Cote and Levine, 2002; Lingren and Wahlin, 2001). As an individual's identity has its roots in a developmental process, which begins early in the individual's life and continues throughout their lifespan, one must also recognise

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the importance of the developmental context (Harter, 1999; Weinreich, 2003) in which an individual is developing and managing their identity (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

Specifically in terms of an individual's socialisation into a new organisational context, the importance of gaining an understanding of the role that identity processes play in that individual's socialisation must be adequately considered if the socialisation process is to be properly facilitated or managed. Gaining this kind of understanding is especially important given the complexities inherent in processes of creating and managing an identity in the current sociohistorical context. If these complexities are not adequately considered by the individual, or by the context that influences the socialisation process, it will become increasingly difficult for successful or satisfactory outcomes to be achieved. This understanding must include the individual's engagement in the macro, overall changes that occur in one's 'way of being' as one enters a new context and establishes a new identity (Ashforth, 2001) and also include an understanding of the day-to-day work the individual must do in relation to maintaining their sense of themselves, as they change between the different contexts that exist in their life (Ashforth, 2001; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Leonard, Beauvais and Scholl, 1999). Engaging with the macro, overall changes, and the day-to-day identity-related challenges, is necessary in order for the individual to maintain and enhance their sense of coherence and continuity across different situations and across time (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

The focus of the current research study, presented in this thesis, is on the identity-creation and identity-management processes involved in an individual's entry into a new organisational context. More specifically the current research study examined the identity-creation and identity-management processes involved in thirty-

four mature students' entry into Irish University undergrataute courses. This focus invovles the examination of how individual identity-structure may be described, how an individual's identity-structure is affected by their entry into a new context and the associated process of identity-creation and also how an individual manages their identity-structure on a day-to-day basis during such a period of identity-creation.

1.2. Summary of Content

This thesis is divided into three sections (see fig 1). **Section A** (chapters two to nine) presents the theoretical foundation of the research study, a summary of the existing

Section A. Chapter two. Introduction to Section A	Section B. Chapter ten. Introduction to Section B	Section C. Chapter fifteen. Introduction to Section C
Section A. Chapter three. Identity in Sociohistorical Context	Section B. Chapter eleven. Identity-structure Results from the Life Domain Survey Booklet and Participant Interviews	Section C. Chapter sixteen. Discussion
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Figure 1. Thesis chapter structure by section

literature relating to identity-related concepts such as identity-structure and processes of identity-creation and identity-management, a statement of the research question and the details relating to the methodological framework that was adopted in the study.

Section B (chapters ten to fourteen) presents the data that emerged from the research study and **section C** (chapters fifteen to seventeen) is made up of the theoretical discussion and thesis conclusion.

Chapter two provides an introduction to **section A**.

Chapter three presents a review of the concept of identity in a cultural and sociohistorical context. It reveals how people conceive of themselves differently in different cultures, at different points in history, and highlights the importance of taking these facts into account when investigating issues related to identity. While this chapter is not directly linked to the core issues of the current research study it does provide a contextual backdrop to the overall review and it's discussion of identity in context.

Chapter four presents a review of the literature that focuses on concepts of identity within a developmental context. Again this chapter, along with chapter five, provides a contextual backdrop to the overall review and highlights the appropriate way in which concepts of identity should be viewed and studied. Chapter four focuses on identity-creation and identity-management in childhood and adolescence, where the groundwork is laid for the identity-development that will occur throughout the rest of the individual's life. The function of this chapter is to review existing literature and research that discusses a contextualised view of the development of an individual's

identity-structure, as an alternative to merely presenting the identity-structure of an individual in adulthood, without reference to its developmental origins.

Chapter five reviews literature that focuses on identity-creation and identity-management processes in adulthood. Adulthood is divided into early adulthood, midlife, and late adulthood. From this point on the literature review becomes more directly related to the current research study, in that the participants in the current research study were in various stages of adulthood, were entering a new context and had to manage their lives on a day-to-day basis during the identity-creation process.

Chapter six reviews the literature relating to new entrants in organisational contexts and how they engage in a process of creating a new identity for that specific organisational context. This chapter reviews literature related to concepts of organisational socialisation, entry shock, normalisation and how individual's form groups and relationships within specific contexts.

Chapter seven explores the literature relating to how individuals, on a day-to-day basis, change between different identities as they negotiate the different contexts that exist in their lives. This exploration necessarily involves reviewing the literature describing identity-change as a process of transitioning or border/boundary-crossing across borders/boundaries.

Chapter eight presents a summary of the literature review and the research question that drives the current research study. The research question focuses on individual identity-structure and on the identity-creation and identity-management processes involved in an individual's entry into a new organisational context.

Chapter nine presents the methodological framework that was adopted in the study, which investigates identity-creation and identity-management processes in first year mature students in two Irish universities. While this research study employs a multi-

method design, in that it utilises both quantitative and qualitative methods, the methodological framework was principally driven by a data-led qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview data using a discursive psychology analytic method.

Chapter ten functions as an introduction to **section B**, the results, as a detailed analysis of the data collected in the current research study is presented. **Chapter eleven** presents the data relating to the structure of the participants' identity-structures, and related issues. **Chapter twelve** explores the overarching narratives produced by the participants as they engaged in a process of context-specific-identity-creation, while **chapter thirteen** deals with the participants' descriptions of their day-to-day identity-management as they participated in university life. **Chapter fourteen** focuses on participant constructions relating to how they formed groups and relationships in the university context. These results also explore what impact the formation of these groups and relationships had on the issues discussed in the previous two chapters.

Section C begins with **chapter fifteen**, which provides an introduction to the discussion and conclusion chapters.

Chapter sixteen is the discussion, which attaches a theoretical dimension to the research results, presented in **section B**, in order that possible explanations for the participants' constructions of their identity-structure, identity-creation processes and identity-management processes can be explored.

Chapter seventeen is the final chapter in this thesis as it provides a summary of what has been presented in the first fourteen chapters. This chapter also contains an assessment of the quality of the research study, the limitations of the research methodology, the implications of the research and the potential significance for future research.

Section A

2. Introduction to Section A

2.1. The Structure of Section A

Section A. Chapter two. Introduction to Section A
Section A. Chapter three. Identity in Sociohistorical Context
Section A. Chapter four. Identity in a Developmental Context: Childhood and Adolescence
Section A. Chapter five. Identity in a Developmental Context: Adulthood
Section A. Chapter six. Context-specific-identity-creation
Section A. Chapter seven. Identity-management
Section A. Chapter eight. Literature Review Summary and Research Question
Section A. Chapter nine. Methodology

Section B. Chapter ten. Introduction to Section B
Section B. Chapter eleven. Identity-structure Results from the Life Domain Survey Booklet and Participant Interviews
Section B. Chapter twelve. Context-specific-identity-creation Narratives
Section B. Chapter thirteen. Identity-management during a Period of Identity-creation
Section B. Chapter fourteen. The formation of Groups and Relationships in the University Context

Section C. Chapter fifteen. Introduction to Section C
Section C. Chapter sixteen. Discussion
Section C. Chapter seventeen. Conclusion

Figure 2. The structure of section A in relation to the overall thesis structure

Section A (see figure 2) of the thesis is made up of chapters two to nine (see figure 3). The current chapter functions as an introduction to chapter three to nine. Chapter three focuses on literature relating to concepts of identity within different cultural and sociohistorical contexts, and how these contexts should be taken into account when investigating identity related concepts. Chapter four presents a review of the literature that focuses on concepts of identity-creation and identity-management

2. Introduction to Section A

3. Identity in Sociohistorical Context

4. Identity in a Developmental Context: Childhood and Adolescence

5. Identity in a Developmental Context: Adulthood

6. Context-specific-identity-creation

7. Identity-management

8. Literature Review Summary and Research Question

9. Methodology
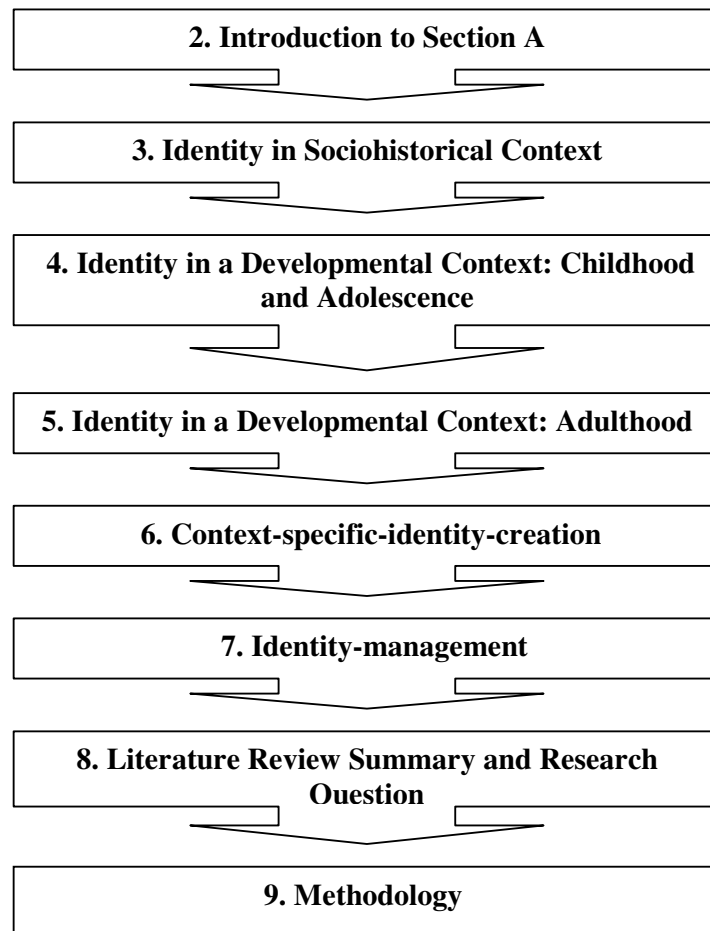
Figure 3. The structure of section A

in childhood and adolescence, where the groundwork is laid for the identity development that will occur throughout the rest of the individual's life. The presentation of this literature provides a contextualised view of the development of an individual's identity-structure. Chapter five reviews the existing literature relating to identity-related processes in the various stages of adulthood. Chapter six focuses on the literature relating to processes of identity-creation by new organisational entrants and those factors that influence the identity-creation process. Chapter seven presents literature relating to individual engagement in identity-management processes on a

day-to-day basis as they negotiate the different contexts in their lives. Chapter eight summaries the literature review presented in chapters three to seven and then presents the research question that drives the current research study. The methodological framework that was adopted in the current research study is presented in chapter nine.

3. Identity in Sociohistorical Context

3.1. The Position of Chapter Three within Section A

2. Introduction to Section A
3. Identity in Sociohistorical Context
4. Identity in a Developmental Context: Childhood and Adolescence
5. Identity in a Developmental Context: Adulthood
6. Context-specific-identity-creation
7. Identity-management
8. Literature Review Summary and Research Question
9. Methodology
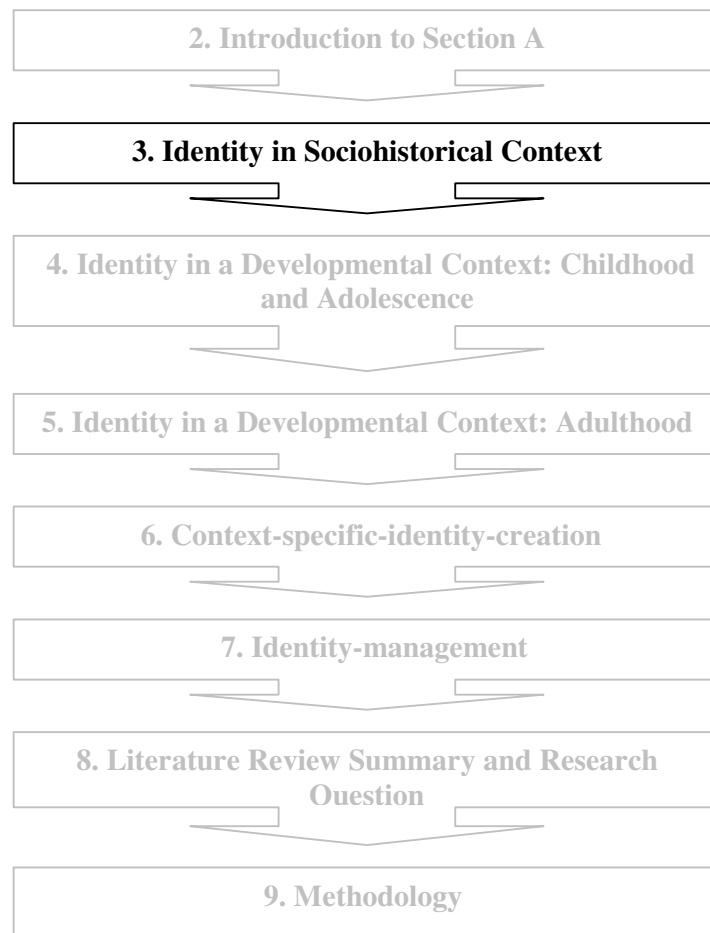
Figure 4. The structure of section A: Chapter three. Identity in sociohistorical context

Chapter three is the second chapter in Section A (see figure 4). This chapter seeks to present a review of the existing literature highlighting the importance of viewing an individual's identity in a cultural and sociohistorical context. The function of the chapter is to provide a contextual backdrop for how identity and identity related issues might be viewed and studied.

3.2. The Structure of Chapter Three

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  3.3. Introduction: Identity in      │
│  Cultural and Sociohistorial Context │
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│  3.4. A Short History of Identity    │
│  in Western Culture                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│  3.5. Identity from a Social         │
│  Psychology Perspective: A Brief     │
│  History                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
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│  3.6. Summary                        │
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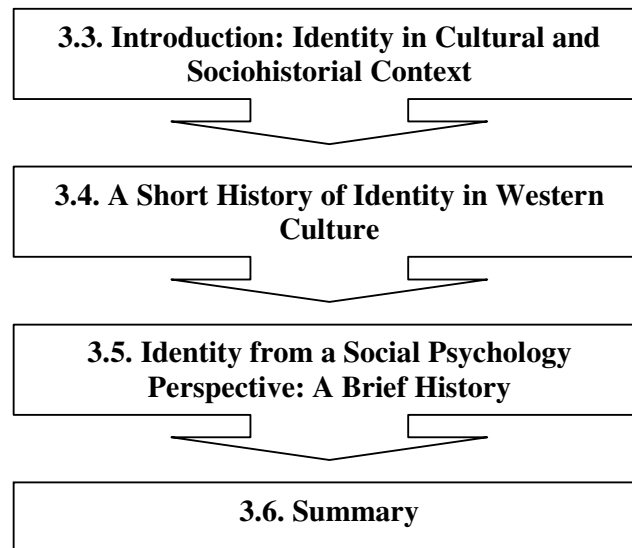
Figure 5. The structure of chapter three

This chapter (see figure 5) will begin by emphasizing the existence of cross-cultural variability in identity-structure and identity-processes, before moving on to describe theorised accounts of how identity and identity related issues have been viewed differently in different sociohistorical contexts. Finally there will be a brief account of how identity has been viewed through the history of social psychology. This chapter focuses on literature that has originated within the field of social psychology and examines the issue of how perspectives on identity differ in different cultural and sociohistorical contexts. The chapter does not delve into fields such as philosophy or history in order to seek further relevant information on this topic. While it would be acknowledged that an exploration of these areas would deliver further discussion on this topic, it was beyond the remit and resources of this thesis to do so.

3.3. Introduction: Identity in Cultural and Sociohistorial Context
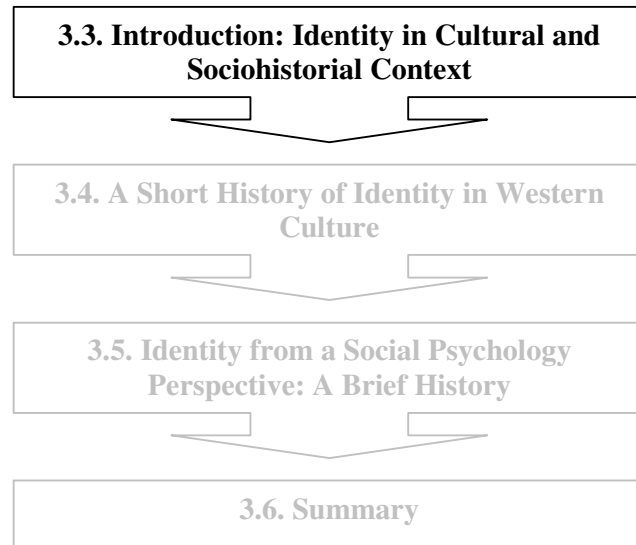
Figure 6. The structure of chapter three: 3.3. Introduction: Identity in cultural and sociohistorial context

This introduction (see figure 6) presents literature that highlights the way in which an investigation of identity-related concepts must take account of the cultural and sociohistorial contexts that influence these concepts. The manner in which humans perceive themselves has a history as long as we have been self-aware or have been able to experience a reflexive consciousness. The perception that an individual has of themselves as 'a person' has come to be one of the most cherished conceptions that any individual holds (Carrithers, Collins and Lukes, 1985). The conceptualisation of individual identity has varied over time and is affected by numerous factors such as the prevailing culture or the "social institutional constraints and their associated normative expectations", within which individual's exist/have existed (Kashima and Foddy, 2002, pp. 181; Baumeister, 1999; Bukobza, 2007; Cote, 1996; Freeman, 1993; Harbus, 2002; McLean, Pasupathi and Pais, 2007; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004). In some cultures there is no perceived separation between identity and body, and from

this perspective identity is body (Baumeister, 1999), while in others there is no perceived separation between past and present (Lee, 1959, cited by Freeman, 1993). Certain Buddhist perspectives view the current, Western preoccupation with matters relating to identity, along with the specific preference for viewing oneself as an external object, as a form of ignorance (Harter, 1999). Therefore, any discussion of identity-structures and identity-processes that is based on a current, Western cultural perspective is a 'local' one (Freeman, 1993), and so may be somewhat limited by the fact that it may not fit with the perspectives of other cultures that view identity differently from Western culture. For example, Eastern cultures tend to view the group, rather than the individual, as the defining feature of social life. However, it must be acknowledged that dichotomies such as Eastern and Western culture or western and non-western thinking are, in themselves, overly simplistic categorisations (Bukobza, 2007).

3.4. A Short History of Identity in Western Culture
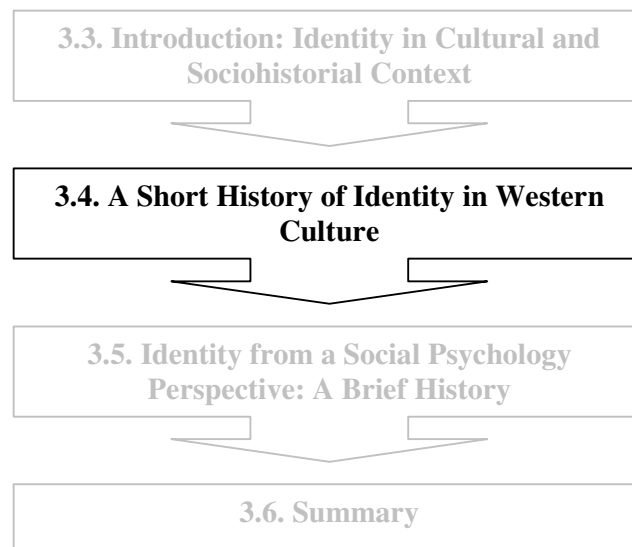
Figure 7. The structure of chapter three: 3.4. A short history of identity in Western culture

For the current research study's focus on identity-related issues to be placed, in this chapter (see figure 7), within an appropriate sociohistorical context necessitates a discussion of the ways in which the view of individual identity-structure in Western culture has changed over time. Although Van Halen and Janssen (2004) refer to the changes that have occurred, over the centuries, in terms of how we view identity as being a commonly accepted conclusion in the self and identity literature, there are only a small number of theorists in the social psychology or identity studies areas who focus directly on this area (for example: Baumeister, 1987; 1999; Cote, 1996; Hendrick and Hendrick, 1983; Kashima and Foddy, 2002; Smith, 2002). The concept of identity in the medieval era can be seen as having involved a view of the individual as a straightforward, easily perceived entity. This can be contrasted with the modern perspective where a perception of the individual as complex and difficult to understand predominates (Baumeister, 1987; 1999; Cote and Levine, 2002; Kashima and Foddy, 2002; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004).

In Late Medieval Europe there appears to have been little interest in knowing the structure of one's identity, at least not for the majority of individuals. There does not appear to be evidence of any substantial sense of identity-structure, an 'inner self'. One's identity was seen as being the same thing as one's visible actions, and thus was perceived as being a straightforward entity (Baumeister, 1999; Cote and Levine, 2002). The dominance of Christian views, influenced by the teachings of St. Augustine, produced a particular view of life. Life was viewed as being a precursor to an afterlife, where one would enjoy eternal salvation and fulfilment or suffer eternal damnation, according to clear guidelines one could follow. Social order, from this perspective, can be seen as something that was perceived by people in the Late Medieval Period as a 'great chain of being' and as fixed, stable and a product of

divine decree. One's identity, in late medieval times, can then be seen as being something that was determined by "very stable, visible, ascribed attributes, such as family membership, social rank, adult vs. child, place of birth, and gender" (Baumeister, 1999, pp. 4; Cote, 1996; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004). Medieval culture was postfigurative, with children learning primarily from their forebears (Mead, 1870, cited in Cote, 1996). Well defined transitions, for example becoming an adult or marriage, marked the taking on of new components of individual identity (Baumeister, 1987).

Love, in medieval life, does not appear to have been seen as an essential part of leading a fulfilled life. Those who were not in love did not wish to be so and those people who were in love were often looked upon with condescension or derision by others in their community (Baumeister, 1987). The idea that love should represent a primary basis for marriage appears to have only developed in the eighteenth century, and it is only in the present century that it has become the predominant view (Hendrick and Hendrick, 1983).

In terms of the medieval sociocultural context in which people existed, individuals tended to live in tightly knit social networks, such as family households, villages or townships, under the rule of some external political organisation, such as empire or state, that would provide a socioeconomic framework for trade, law etc. Members of these communities participated in multiple activities together, for example religious or agricultural activities, rather than having any single, simple relationship with an individual (Kashima and Foddy, 2002). This would have resulted in strong social pressure to remain loyal to tradition, to conform, with deviation being punished (Cote 1996; Cote and Levine, 2002). In summary, this heteronomous, ascribed identity (Cote, 1996) in the Late Medieval Period can be seen as having been

a concrete entity bounded by the individual's physical and temporal context and place in the community (Kashima and Foddy, 2002).

Changes in how identity was conceived appear to have occurred in the early modern period, when the idea of self-knowledge became more complex due to an emerging view of one's identity as something that was inner and hidden (Baumeister, 1987; Riesman, 1950, cited in Cote, 1996). A possible causative factor was a breakdown of Late Medieval Social Order where people and their roles were no longer perceived as being congruent. This breakdown may have been linked to increased social mobility, which saw the growth of a middle class. With this separation of individual and society a new focus on inner individuality began (Beaumeister, 1987; Riesman, 1950, cited in Cote, 1996). The "inner nature of selfhood", which is assumed by much of modern psychological thought, can be traced back to the 16th century (Baumeister, 1987, pp. 165). Social change, such as that described above, disrupts cultural continuity as it affects the relationship between socialisers and socialisees (Mead, 1970, cited in Cote, 1996).

The early modern period also recorded a move towards secularisation, which brought with it a belief in a potential for human fulfilment in this life, rather than in an afterlife. In the 17th and 18th centuries enlightenment thought provided a challenge to Christianity with its emphasis on evidence, rational thought and scepticism (Kashima and Foddy, 2002; Lifton, 1999; O'Grady, 2001). This produced a view of the individual as a locus of causal processes governed by natural law, an individuated agent with a capacity for reason (Kashima and Foddy, 2002). This may have influenced individuals away from utilising Christian faith as the central guiding framework by which they lived their lives. Without this unquestioned framework to live by, the view that an individual was required to "discharge the obligations of the

rank and station" (Baumeister, 1987, pp.167) to which they were born ended, or at least became more flexible. This further facilitated an increase in social mobility and hence more flexibility in how individuals defined themselves. The growth of the middle class also brought with it a focus on wealth as a metric for self-definition and status, taking over from lineage that was a more stable and inflexible basis of self-definition (Cote, 1996).

The romantic period (late 18th and early 19th centuries) is characterised by a rise in the belief that everybody had a unique and special destiny or potential (Kashima and Foddy, 2002). The adoption of such a belief would have led to an increased focus on how individuals made their decisions regarding their self-definition, as there was an increased focus on how one's identity should be constructed (Cote, 1996). This can be seen as being due, partly, to a decline in Christianity, which was perceived as no longer being able to provide the destination of one's life, for example heaven, or the means by which to arrive at the destination, for example moral codes. Associated with this was an unwillingness to suffer frustration or non-fulfilment during one's life (Baumeister, 1987). Identity in the romantic period moved away from the cool, rational person to a view of identity as something that should be discovered and actualised, and contains a core of "profound emotionality and differentiated personality" (Kashima and Foddy, 2002, pp. 184). During the romantic period there was an attempt to replace Christian salvation with earthly means of self-fulfilment, particularly work (especially creative art) and inner passion or love.

The social changes brought about by the industrial revolution (1750-1850), population explosion, social mobility, and the introduction of ideas like individual freedom and equality by the American (1775-1776) and French (1789-1799)

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revolutions facilitated a move away from older ways of viewing social order. However, increased social flexibility resulted in there being less prescribed guidance for how to achieve self-actualisation (Cote, 1996; Kashima and Foddy, 2002). Self-actualisation represents a goal an individual can aim towards but which they will rarely achieve as it is a vague concept, perhaps signifying a desire for such concepts while experiencing a lack of the same. An individual may feel unfulfilled and frustrated without having a clear idea of what fulfilment would be for them. A period of escalating pessimism is seen to have followed with a view of an uncaring social order that victimised and exploited the masses predominated (Baumeister, 1987; Kashima and Foddy, 2002; Riesman, 1950, cited in Cote, 1996).

During the Victorian era the parts of an individual's identity that were perceived to be 'hidden' expanded as individuals' self-scrutiny was combined with impossibly high moral standards. The Victorians' can be seen as having been self-deceptive in order to guard their identity, which they believed could be revealed involuntarily at any time if they were not guarded in their social interactions. This belief that their identity could be 'seen' by others was highlighted by Freud's work on self-deception, which was influential enough that from this period onward there has been a prevailing belief that it is not possible to know oneself completely (Baumeister, 1987). The private sphere of home and family was highly regarded at this time, set against the uncertain nature of public life. It was also at this time that the family, due to increased urban industrialism, lost its function as an economic unit and became, primarily, a source of intimacy and emotional relations for family members (Campbell-Clarke, 2000; Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001; Sennett, 1974). This transition forms the basis of current beliefs, in Western culture, that intimate

relationships are necessary for psychological health and wellbeing (Baumeister, 1987).

The view of identity as being internal to an individual and difficult to access continued to develop in the 20th and 21st century, until identity had changed from being something easy to see and know to being something that is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to know (Baumeister, 1987; Cote and Levine, 2002; Kashima and Foddy, 2002). In the past the context that an individual was born into determined their place in society. Now, due to the evolution of social reforms and other factors a development in thinking occurred that promoted the idea that individuals have the freedom to be whoever they want to be (Beaumeister, 1987; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004). "Choice has replaced obligation as the basis of self-definition" (Cote and Levine, 2002, pp. 1).

Modern self-definition now depends on a changing, uncertain mixture of choices and accomplishments, and identity is assumed, perhaps unrealistically, to contain the values on which these choices are made (Baumeister, 1999; Cote and Levine, 2002). Actively defining who one is has become a critical activity in Western culture. It is now necessary, due to a flexible and complex societal structure, to decide who one is, for example what career one will pursue, who one will marry etc. Therefore the process of self-definition is more psychologically demanding than in the past. As individual identity is treated more as a commodity individuals feel that they must actively manage their identity-structure by "reflexively and strategically fitting oneself into a community of 'strangers' by meeting their approval through the creation of the right impression" (Cote, 1996, pp. 421). This is made more difficult by the fact that previous "fixed set answers" (Baumeister, 1987, pp. 166), for example those provided by religious faiths, or by the concept of work as a source of fulfilment,

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have lost much of their potential as a source of fulfilment due to modern organisation of work and the workplace, and are therefore increasingly being abandoned (Smith, 2002; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004). At a time when there is an increase in the perceived need for guidance in how to define oneself, there are less traditional frameworks to draw on in order to do so. This has led, in some cases, to individuals engaging with more extreme versions of traditional, fixed set answers, for example through religious fundamentalism. In the past secularism, science and technology were seen as a viable alternative to the 'falling star' of religious faith and its associated heavenly rewards, however people now perceive that these provide only a limited number of relatively shallow sources of fulfilment, and so turn to tried and tested sources of sociocultural support (Smith, 2002). Many individuals welcome the ability to make choices, but may not have developed the means to cope with the process of making those choices, being responsible for their choices and having to live with the consequences of those choices. This has, in many instances, led to the normalisation of emerging identity related problems for individuals such as "being: unsure about what they believe in; uncommitted to any course of future action; open to influence and manipulation; and unaware that they should pass a sense of meaning to their children" (Cote and Levine, 2002, pp. 2).

The modern sociocultural context in which people live is one of economic interdependence as individuals act as traders in multiple, but simple, relationships with others. This is in opposition to the Late Medieval Era, when individuals existed in a single social unit, producing and consuming good and services. The majority of individuals now exchange their labour for monetary rewards that are then used to obtain goods and services. This tendency towards sparse social networks results in individuals having relationships with different individuals and groups who may not

have any relationship, exchange or social, with each other. This frees the individual from having to conform to a single, all-inclusive world-view, as those in a tightly knit medieval society did. Instead the individual may have to contend with multiple, perhaps differing, expectations of conformity from the different individuals and groups in their lives (Kashima and Foddy, 2002). From this situation evolves a heightened need for multiple self-representations, or a multidimensional identity-structure, to satisfy the different contexts that exist in one's life.

In the early 20th century individuals tended to perceive themselves as being at the mercy of social forces, such as economic interdependence, brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation, which infringed on the individual's ability to pursue private fulfilment (Beaumesiter, 1987). Modern society reduces the degree to which individuality can be reached by an individual, through the effects of 'managing' individuals' identities through advertising, mass-media, organisation of work and economic interdependence (Cote, 1996). For example due to the 'omni-access' of media images and stories an individual's sense of themselves can be affected by 'witnessing' national or international events in ways that were previously unavailable (Lifton, 1999). Post-modern perspectives developed after world war two that promoted accommodation and compromise with society aimed for the twin goals of finding a place within society and asserting oneself. One could say that individuals have begun to accept that involvement in society cannot generally be avoided, and that society does not promise fulfilment. It is under these circumstances that individuals must actively and creatively seek fulfilment (Baumeister, 1987).

From a modern perspective love is regarded by current Western culture as a central ideal of individual fulfilment, with those who do not encounter this phenomenon in their life being regarded as unfulfilled. Love is now seen as being the

proper basis of marriage, which is contrary to earlier attitudes in Western culture and present attitudes in other cultures. Although passionate love may be a potential source of fulfilment, there is the drawback of the "impermanence of passion", which does not make it "conducive to prolonged and stable satisfaction" (Baumeister, 1987, pp. 168).

Due to modern work schedules, and the social reforms that facilitated them, one must consider the possibility that leisure time or pursuits could be significant sources of fulfilment for some individuals. The last century has also seen the rise of impersonal recognition as a perceived fulfilling goal. Celebrity, to be known or recognised, has taken precedence over fame, respect or recognition for what one has accomplished, or personality has taken precedence over achievement. Modern fulfilment is also seen to be heavily connected to hedonistic self-indulgence and pleasant sensations (Baumeister, 1987).

The current, popular conception of the individual, in Western culture, as an essential entity has involved the creation of a "cult of the individual", where a shared moral worldview has placed a focus on individual decision making, capacities and human rights as the prevailing, abstract reality. Although there is now a greater focus on individuality this perspective is a collective ideal shared by many in Western culture, and increasingly other cultures influenced by Western culture. This represents an alternative moral underpinning to the previously existing frameworks emphasising collective consciousness, for example religion with its historical status as a "transcendental source of truth and goodness" (Kashima and Foddy, 2002, pp. 190). Individualism is a privileged, reified discourse (Musson and Duberley, 2007) grounded on unstated, strongly held assumptions in current Western culture. Scheff (2006) suggests that "human intelligence is easily capable of innovation, but is often trapped in the take-for-granted worldview of the larger society" (Scheff, 2006, pp.

48), and that the focus on individualism traps individuals in Western culture in the current sociohistorical period at a "flat earth stage" with regard to how they conceptualise human experience and behaviour (Scheff, 2006, pp. 49).

The way in which individuals currently think of themselves is constantly changing as technological and social innovations, such as virtual identities in cyberspace (Van Halen and Janssen, 2004), provide new ways to imagine life. Psychology itself can be seen as an example of this, as it has participated "in a sociohistorical process by providing conceptions of the person, which may in turn be appropriated by people for the construction of their own self-conceptions" (Kashima, Foddy and Platow, 2002, pp. vii). Psychology's focus on the individual as a unit of analysis has provided images and metaphors of identity, as well as advice on self-improvement, which become connected with the current sociocultural environment and are adopted by people as they develop concepts of themselves (Kashima and Foddy, 2002). Psychological knowledge is used by industry to create dissonance in individuals in order to promote consumerism, as individual identity becomes 'managed' and image oriented (Cote, 1996; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004).

3.5. Identity from a Social Psychology Perspective: A Brief History

As well as placing the current research study within an appropriate cultural and sociohistorical context it must also be acknowledged that the current research study is located within a particular academic field that has had its own history with regard to conceptualising identity-related issues (see figure 8). In contemporary social psychology topics related to identity, or similar concepts such as 'the self', are among the most studied, in stark contrast to earlier periods where interest was sparse, to the point where the study of identity seemed to be, as Pepitone suggested, "dead as a dodo

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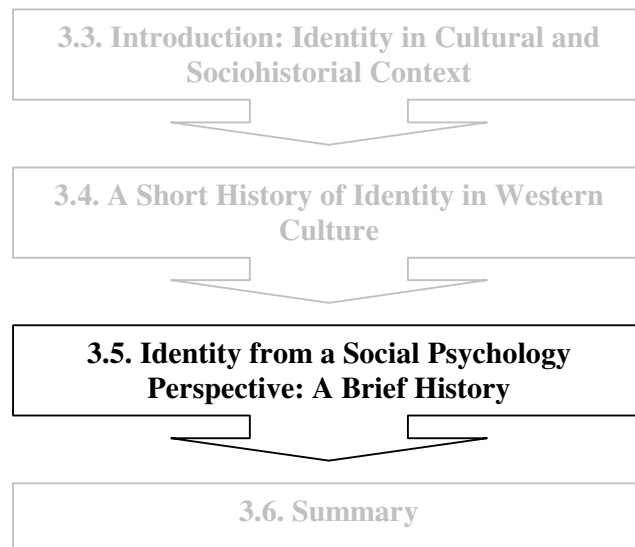
Figure 8. The structure of chapter three: 3.5. Identity from a social psychology perspective: A brief history

bird" (1968, pp. 347, cited in Hales, 1985). In recent decades the study of issues related to identity have changed in some fundamental ways, particularly in terms of the reduction in focus on representations of identity as a unified entity and an increase in the support for a multidimensional framework of identity (Harter, Bresnick, Bouchey and Whitesell, 1997).

Historically in psychology there have been periods when identity has been seen as an interesting area for study, for example at the beginning of the twentieth century theorists such as James and Calkins focused on identity related topics (Kashima and Yamaguchi, 1999; Pratkanis and Greenwald, 1985). William James (1890; 1999) is credited with laying the foundations of the view of a multidimensional identity-structure in relation to different interpersonal roles or relationships (Roberts and Donahue, 1994).

"*a man has as many selves as there are individuals who recognise*

him…we may practically say that he has as many social selves as there

are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups" (James, 1999, pp. 70).

Despite these Jamesian foundations most theorising done on identity in the first half of the twentieth century focused on identity and the individual, as a unified, integrated, unidimensional entity (Harter et al, 1997; Markus and Nurius, 1986). Social psychology, at this time, utilised the experimental model of the physical sciences and was dominated by a behaviouristic ideology that presumed research subjects were passive and psychologists limited their study of human behaviour to overt behaviours. This situation was perpetuated by the structures in social psychology that reward those who conform to the dominant model of the day, through the publishing of their research and the granting to them of academic tenure (Hales, 1985).

More recently there has been a return to a multidimensional view of identity, and the examination of how an individual varies across time and different situations (Harter et al, 1997). Some existing theories, for example theories of cognitive dissonance, conformity and attitude change, were modified in order to explain their impact on how individuals need to maintain or enhance their self-image. This indicates that issues related to identity and self-image are central and important, or that theorists in recent years have been influenced by a current socio-cultural emphasis on identity (Hales, 1985). Identity is now seen as an organiser of knowledge and as an organiser of one's world (Damon and Hart, 1988; Pratkanis and Greenwald, 1985).

3.6. Summary

This chapter attempts to review and highlight the literature that discusses the way in which concepts of identity vary and have varied across different cultural and sociohistorical contexts. This understanding is important if research conducted in the area of identity, identity-structure, identity-creation and/or identity-management is to avoid reifying concepts of identity as objective and unchanging. The review has also shown how the conceptualisation of identity has changed throughout the history of social psychology along with how identity has been conceptualised. The current view of identity is, in many fields of study, moving away from a perspective of identity as a unified, integrated, unidimensional entity and towards a view of identity-structures as being multidimensional.

4. Identity in a Developmental

Context: Childhood and Adolescence

4.1. The Position of Chapter Four within Section A

2. Introduction to Section A

3. Identity in Sociohistorical Context

4. Identity in a Developmental Context: Childhood and Adolescence

5. Identity in a Developmental Context: Adulthood

6. Context-specific-identity-creation

7. Identity-management

8. Literature Review Summary and Research Question

9. Methodology
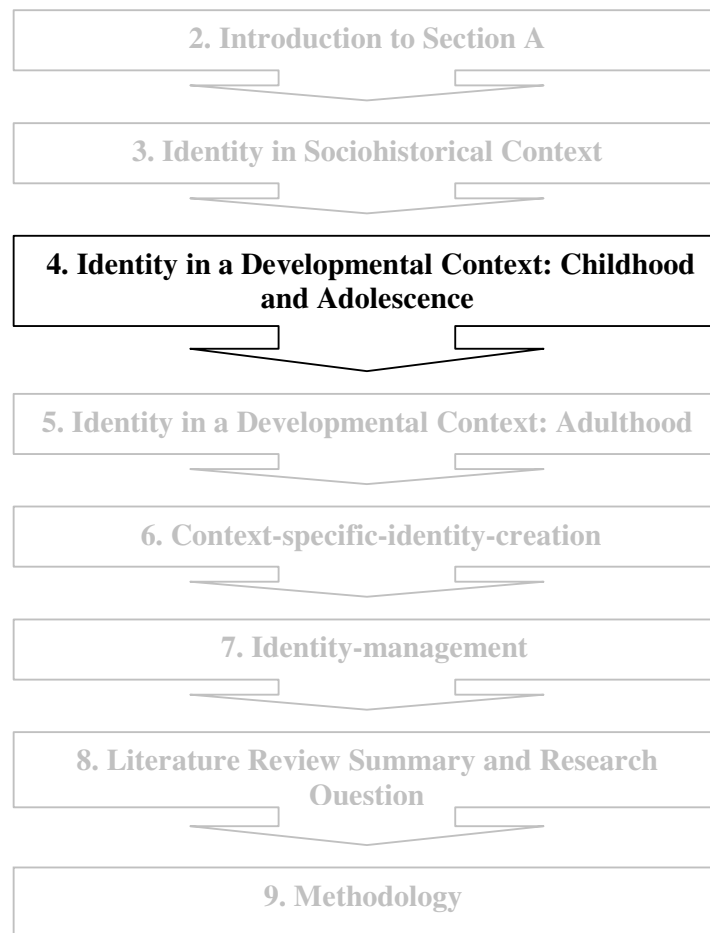
Figure 9. The structure of section A: Chapter four. Identity in a developmental context: Childhood and Adolescence

Chapters four and five (see figure 9) present existing literature pertaining to the creation and management of identity-structures, and will place these processes within a developmental context, moving chronologically through the lifespan. Placing the discussion of identity-related issues within a developmental context helps to avoid utilising descriptions of the individual and their identity-structure where the individual is discussed only in terms of their adult identity-structure. In such cases it is as if the individual did not have a past in which to build up the identity-structure under

examination. It is important to remember that the amount of commitment individuals give to different contexts, for example work and family, differs over time (Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001). Throughout an individual's life things change, families grow, priorities shift and therefore a developmental or lifespan perspective must be included in the study of identity related issues.

4.2. The Structure of Chapter Four

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   4.3. The Creation and Development of the    │
│              General-identity                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│    4.4. The Creation and Development of an     │
│       Identity-portfolio in Adolescence        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 4.5. Summary                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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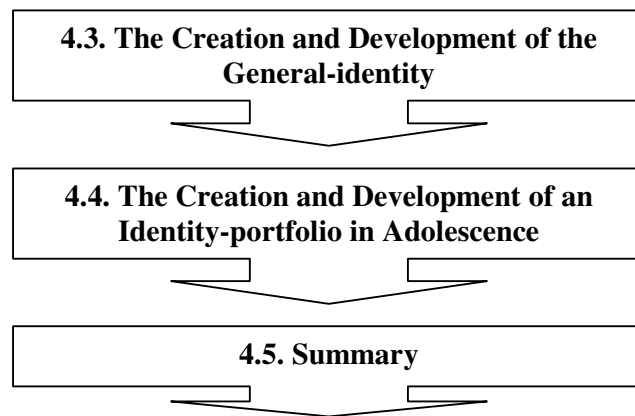
Figure 10. The structure of chapter four

Chapter four (see figure 10) presents literature that has a focus on identity-related issues in childhood and adolescence. Specifically, chapter four focuses on the creation of a general-identity in childhood, in response to a child's socialisation by a primary reference group, and the creation of a multidimensional identity-structure (the identity-portfolio) in adolescence, in response to the adolescent's socialisation into a number of different groups. There will also be an examination of how the individual forms a view of the possible future-identity-structures they aspire to, or wish to avoid, and finally how these elements of the individual's identity-structure are a source of motivation for the individual.

4.3. The Creation and Development of the General-identity in Childhood

Figure 11. The structure of chapter four: 4.3. The creation and development of the general-identity

This subsection (see figure 11) will present existing literature relating to the creation of a general-identity in childhood. The emergence of language in childhood (Damon and Hart, 1988) leads to the attainment of the ability to label oneself, and others, which facilitates the development of the child's self-understanding. This typically occurs in middle-late childhood as the child begins to create and develop a general-identity. This development begins once appropriate cognitive-developmental advances have been made. The child develops a referential, general (Roberts and Donahue, 1994) or global (Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999) sense of himself/herself. This sense of himself/herself involves the child perceiving him/herself as object rather than merely as subject (Damon and Hart, 1988), and is based on memories and narrative conventions (Harter, 1999). This overall sense an individual has of themselves has been referred to as the global identity, global or general identity (Leonard et al, 1999), self, overall self, (Stryker and Serpe, 1994),

general self, general self-concept or the total identity (Roberts and Donahue, 1994) and will be referred to as the general-identity in this thesis (see figure 12). This term has been chosen out of the several possible terms that could have been used because of its simplicity and clarity. The child can then begin building up a life story (McAdams, 1993) or portrait of themselves (Harter, 1999) that is based more on psychological, and social, self- descriptors than physical self-descriptions (Damon and

Cultural/Sociohistorical Context

General-identity
(Created through interaction
with/influence from Primary Reference
Group)
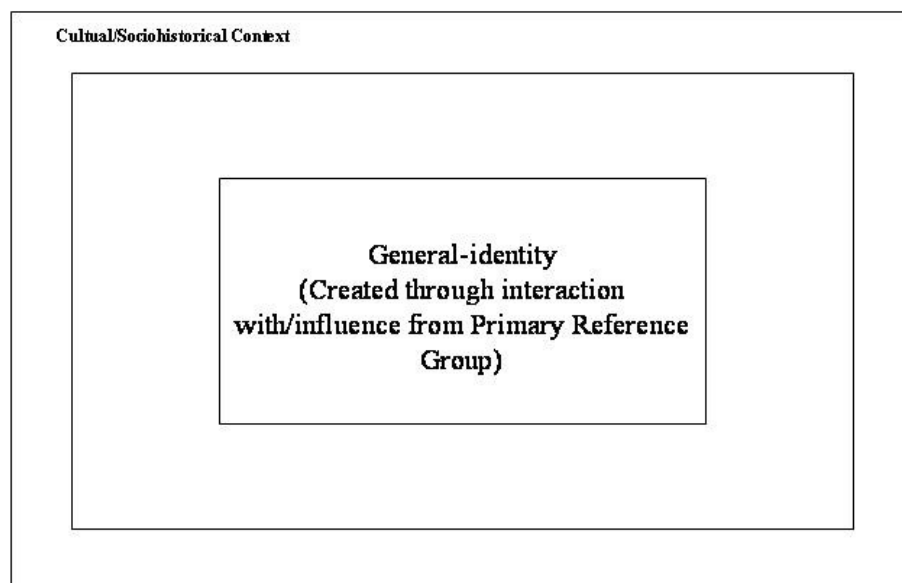
Figure 12. Identity-structure in childhood: The general-identity

Hart, 1988). The child can then begin to tell a coherent story or narrative about him/herself (Alvesson, 1994; Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Horrocks and Callahan, 2006; McLean et al, 2007; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Weick, 1996).

The identity-work, carried out in childhood, is the fist step in a process of identity-creation and identity-management that continues for the rest of the individual's life. Identity-work is defined as the engagement in "forming, repairing,

35

maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, pp. 1165). This is not to say that an individual produces a consistent, definitive identity-narrative. Musson and Duberley (2007) highlight recent studies that show identity to be "an amalgam of multiple, diverse and sometimes contradictory narratives" (pp. 147). It is the individual's sense of consistency that is the focus here, a consistency that is often maintained in the face of change or contradiction. In a complex and fragmented context, conscious, effortful identity-work may be more or less continually on-going, whereas in more stable contexts conscious identity-work may only be necessary during times of crisis or transition. Events such as these, transitions, surprises, special events or encounters, may draw the individual's attention to the constructed nature of their identity-structure, and thus compel the individual to engage in more concentrated identity-work, in order to maintain their sense of coherence and distinctiveness (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Such changes or turning points must then be incorporated into the situated stories, discourse or narrative they tell about themselves. A situated story is "a narrative account of personal memory that is created within a specific situation, by particular individuals, for particular audiences, and to fulfil particular goals" (McLean et al, 2007, pp. 263). This is especially true for negative or disruptive experiences (McLean et al, 2007). Some identity-work accomplished is conscious, in that it is "grounded in at least a minimal amount of self-doubt and self-openness" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, pp. 1165). Other identity-work may be unconscious, to the extent that the individual is growing up in what he/she perceives to be 'reality'. Once the individual, in childhood, internalizes the norms and values of the primary reference group, along with the prevailing culture as transmitted to them by the primary reference group, these will become normalised and hence perceptually

invisible to the individual. The state of the child's primary social context will be perceived as 'how things are' and their identity-structure will be perceived as 'who they are' (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). This can occur through repeated storytelling, by the individual, about aspects of their identity, for example "I am honest" (McLean et al, 2007).

The child's ongoing identity-work and development does not occur in a vacuum (Drigotas, Rusbult, Wieselquist and Whitton, 1999) but within a social context where members of the child's primary reference group act as socializing agents. The typical example of a primary reference group is the child's family, who are influenced by the prevailing culture and sociohistorical context (Harter, 1999; McLean et al, 2007; Mortimer, Lorence and Kumka, 1986, cited in Ashforth, 2001). Hence we see the process where culture, groups and individuals co-create one other (see figure 13) (Cote, 1996; Cote and Levine, 2002). Culture nurtures, through its influence on the relationship between socialisers and socialisees, certain personality characteristics and thereby encourages the development of certain chapter-types (Cote, 1996). The feedback, whether deliberately or accidentally given, the child receives in their interaction with their primary reference group functions as a guide for the child as they construct their orientation to the world, and stimulates the form the child's general-identity will take (Harter, 1999; Leonard et al, 1999; Ashforth, 2001).
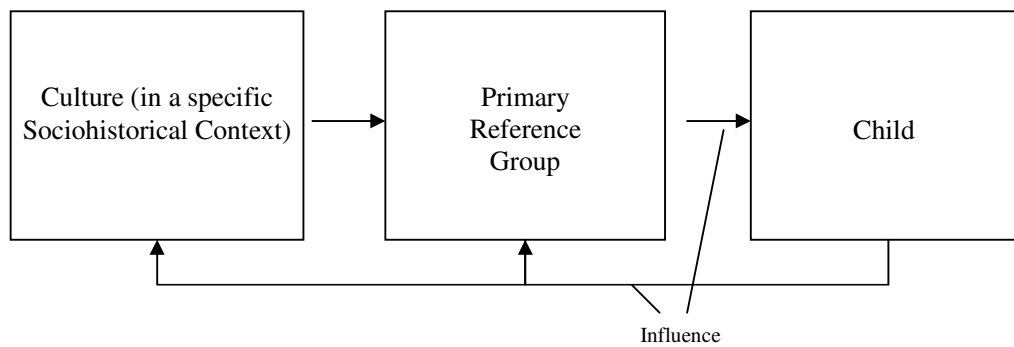
Figure 13. The co-creation of culture, the group and the individual

In the creation and development of the general-identity the child may draw together different skills relating to their narrating or storytelling style (McLean et al, 2007), utilising different "goals, values, beliefs, traits, competencies, time horizons, and ways of acting, thinking and feeling" (Ashforth, 2001, pp. 35). Aspects of the general-identity can be seen as being arranged in a hierarchy of concepts, going from the very broad, inclusive and abstract, for example human-being, male, Irish, to more narrow, specific aspects of the general-identity, for example being good at swimming (see figure 14) (Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth, 2001). The general-identity will consist of core or central features and peripheral features. This will also be true of any subsequent identities created later in the individual's life. The core features of an identity are those features which tend to be important, necessary, typical and defining of the identity, whereas peripheral features of the identity are those that are not as important (Perry, 1997, cited in Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000).

The general-identity typically functions as a positively regarded, self-fulfilling template (Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999). Individuals will tend to have a preference for engaging in activities that are rewarding or satisfying. The more positive an experience is the greater the likelihood of it being utilised by the individual in their self-definition/incorporated into their general-

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                         │
│  Abstract              Life Form        │
│                                         │
│                           -             │
│                                         │
│                        Human Being      │
│                                         │
│  Level of                 -             │
│                                         │
│  Abstraction/            Man            │
│                                         │
│  Specificity              -             │
│                                         │
│                       Professional      │
│                                         │
│                           -             │
│                                         │
│                        Doctor           │
│                                         │
│                           -             │
│                                         │
│                        Surgeon          │
│                                         │
│                           -             │
│                                         │
│  Specific            Neurosurgeon       │
│                                         │
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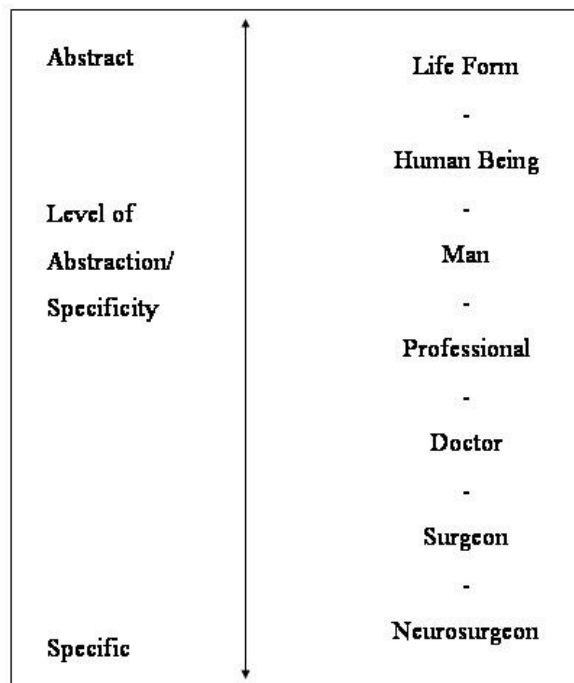
Figure 14. Different contextual levels of self-definition

identity (Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999; Whitbourne, Sneed and Skultety, 2002). This will also occur for those individuals that view themselves negatively, due to genetic predisposition, parental abuse, lack of growth opportunities or traumatic events, who will create and develop a self-fulfilling general-identity around this negative base (Ashforth, 2001). The general-identity provides the individual with both a coherent and consistent identity-structure and a sense of their place in their world. It is self-fulfilling in that how they perceive or make sense of subsequent situations or experiences will be constrained by the existing identity-structure in order to maintain the coherence and consistency of the general-identity. Situations or experiences that are perceived not to fit with the existing identity-structure, or the story the individual tells to themselves and others, are dealt with through the use of one of a number of defence-mechanisms, such as explaining the discrepancy away, by blaming external

forces or effectively forgetting the situation or experience (Ashforth, 2001; McLean et al, 2007; Whitbourne et al, 2002). Where the new perception cannot be dealt with in this way, the individual can also retrospectively (re)construct their general-identity in order to accommodate the change in their perception of themselves or their place in the world. An individual's identity provides meaning, form and continuity to their life experiences (Kroger, 2002b).

The general-identity does not develop into a stable, fixed entity. The child's general-identity will endure throughout his/her lifespan, constantly and fluidly developing as they interact with the elements of the world around them, and correspondingly engage in identity-work (Kroger and Haslett, 1991; Waterman and Archer, 1990, cited in Ashforth, 2001). An individual must retain a sense of continuity in terms of their identity, despite change (Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 2002b). The child is not passive in their development, merely being socialised by outside forces, but is an active participant who engages in identity-work and constructs their identity (Garcia, Hart and Johnson-Ray, 1998).

4.3.1. The Function of Feedback in the Creation and Development of the General-identity

The function of feedback from others is a central concept in identity-development (Harter, 1999; Leonard et al, 1999) and should be included in any discussion of identity-creation and development. Feedback from others is an important part of attitude formation, attitude change and self-attribution (Jones, 1990). Typically, a child will receive constant feedback from others on their traits, competencies and values. "Unambiguous, plentiful and consistent" feedback will

produce strongly held self-perceptions in the child, whereas "ambiguous or inconsistent feedback" or no feedback at all will produce an individual with weakly held self-perceptions (Leonard et al, 1999, pp. 976).

An individual in childhood will typically received two forms of feedback, task feedback and social feedback. Direct observations of the results of their task performance will deliver task feedback. Social feedback is the feedback the child will receive from the behaviour, verbal commentary and/or non-verbal commentary of others. An important aspect of this feedback is that the social feedback people give can be intentional or unintentional on their part (Leonard et al, 1999).

From approximately the age of seven children begin to engage in social comparison in order to gather information for self-evaluation (Harter, 1999; Ruble, 1983, cited in Damon and Hart, 1988; Secord and Peevers, 1974, cited in Damon and Hart, 1988). The child engages in making comparative appraisals, where they observe the behaviours of others to determine their position with respect to a certain attribute relative to others. The child also engages in reflective appraisals, where they observe the verbal and/or non-verbal reactions of others to their behaviours (Jones and Gerard, 1967), and make self-attributions.

Early feedback the child receives from their primary reference group also shapes the child's orientation to the world in terms of how the child's view of 'who they want to be' in the future, or their future-identity-structures, is formed. This has been termed the ideal self, idealized self, aspirational self or identity aspirations (Weinreich, 2003), an idealized image (Schlenker, 1985, cited in Leonard et al, 1999), possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Markus and Wurf, 1987) and is similar to the concepts of personal standards (Bandura, 1991, cited in Leonard et al, 1999). This is an important part of an individual's identity-work, as without a view of how one

will be in the future one's sense of coherence and continuity as 'a person' will be compromised. This has been shown to have adverse affects on the individual (Orbach, Mikulincer, Stein and Cohen, 1998, Baumeister, 1990). These constructed views of future-identity-structures are a reflection of traits, competencies and values one would like to possess, and also those that they would not like to possess (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Markus and Wurf, 1987; Reisman, 1961, cited in Leonard et al, 1999; Weinreich, 2003). They are created based on internalised ideals or behavioural standards from the child's primary reference group (Higgens, Klein and Strauman, 1987, cited in Leonard et al, 1999). This will typically occur in middle to late childhood when the appropriate cognitive-developmental advances have been made, allowing the child to distinguish between their current, 'real' identity-structure and their view of who they want to be, in terms of their future-identity-structures (Harter, 1999).

4.3.2. General-identity as a Source of Motivation

An individual's general-identity can be seen as a source of motivation for that individual's behaviour, as they are motivated to maintain and enhance their internalized view of themselves, both in terms of their current self-perceptions and in terms of who they wish to become (Adams and Marshall, 1996; Ashforth, 2001; Haslam, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999; McLean et al, 2007). The more committed an individual is to a particular future-identity-structure the bigger the impact it will have on current identity-structures and behaviour.

Leonard et al (1999) propose a metatheory of motivation that incorporates the role of identity as a motivational-source into the traditionally cited sources of

motivation. In this metatheory there are five proposed basic sources of motivation (see table 1):

Intrinsic-motivation: the focus of individuals whose dominant-motivational-source is intrinsic-motivation is fun. This is to say that, if at all possible, they will engage in activities that they consider fun. If that activity ceases to be fun then, if at all possible, that individual will stop engaging in that activity. This conception of intrinsic-motivation is somewhat different from previous motivational research;

Extrinsic/Instrumental-motivation: The principal interest of those individuals whose dominant-motivational-source is extrinsic-motivation is extrinsic reward, and therefore decisions made by such individuals will be in line with this. Decisions will be made on the basis of the greatest extrinsic benefit available. If the rewards are removed then these individuals will no longer want to engage in the activity;

External-self-concept: For individuals whose dominant-motivational-source is their external-self-concept the most important thing to have is positive social feedback, relative to those around them. Reputation is very important to these individuals. This can have an individualistic or a collective emphasis. With an individualistic emphasis the individual invests him/herself in a context-specific-identity that involves being part of a group, team or organisation, and this provides the individual with status. With a collective emphasis the individual ties their identity, publicly, to the fate of the group so that when the group is successful the individual feels their identity has been validated in front of everyone. If an individual whose dominant-motivational-source for engaging in an activity was external-self-concept were to no longer receive affirming social feedback relative to those around them then they would no longer wish to engage in that activity;

Internal-self-concept: For an individual whose dominant-motivational-source is internal-self-concept it is also important that there is a tie between their identity and group success. However, it is different from an external-self-concept in that it is not important that others recognise the tie, only that the individual perceives it. They do not require acknowledgement for acknowledgement's sake, only in so far as it allows them to internally believe that their traits and competencies have led to success. If these individuals are engaged in an activity but then stop receiving affirmative task feedback that allows them to be internally satisfied that their identity is linked to the success of the group, team or organisation, then they will wish to cease their involvement in the activity;

Goal-internalisation: None of the things that are important to the previous categories of individuals are important to those individuals whose dominant-motivational-source is goal-internalisation. The only thing that matters to these individuals is that the goals of the group, team or organisation are attained. Feedback, whether task or social, is only used to measure progress towards those goals, and activities will be kept up as long as that progress continues (Barbuto and Scholl, 1998; Leonard et al, 1999).

Under this metatheory every individual has a motivational-profile that reflects the relative strength of these five motivational-sources. Every individual, due to the make up of their identity, also has a dominant source of motivation that becomes a focal point for decision making and behaviour. If a circumstance arises where there is conflict between two or more motivational-sources then the dominant-motivational-source will come out on top with regard to the course of action the individual will choose (Leonard et al, 1999).

Scholl (2002) has shown how Leonard et al's (1999) motivational-sources correspond to previous motivational approaches (see table 1).

Table 1. How Leonard et al's (1999) model corresponds with previous motivational approaches. Adapted from Scholl (2002)

Leonard, Beauvais & Scholl	**Intrinsic Process**	**Instrumental Extrinsic**	**Self Concept: External**	**Self Concept: Internal**	**Goal Identification**
Ryan & Deci	Intrinsic Motivation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Identified Regulation
Maslow		Physiological, Safety	Social, Ego	Ego, Self Actualization	
Alderfer		Existence	Relatedness	Growth	
McClelland		Power	Affiliation, Power	Achievement	
Etzioni		Alienative, Calculative	Social Moral		Pure moral
Janis & Mann		Utilitarian Gains or losses for Self	Approval or Disapproval from Significant Others	Self Approval or Disapproval	Utilitarian Gains or losses for Significant Others
Deci	Task Pleasure	Extrinsic	Interpersonal	Intrinsic: Challenges	Intrinsic: Outcomes
Kohlberg	Heterogeneous	Instrumental	Interpersonal	Principled	Social system
Kegan	Impulsive	Imperial	Interpersonal	Institutional	Inter-Individual
Katz & Kahn		Legal Compliance Rewards/Instrumental Satisfactions		Self Expression Self Concept	Internalized values
Herzberg	Work conditions	Salary, security	Peer relations, subordinate relations, status, recognition	Achievement growth	
Friedman & Havighurst	Expenditure of time and energy	Income	Identification and Status	Meaningful Experience: Self expression	Meaningful Experience: Service to others
Bernard		Material Inducements	Social Inducements		
Bandura	Sensory Intrinsic	Extrinsic		Personal Standards	

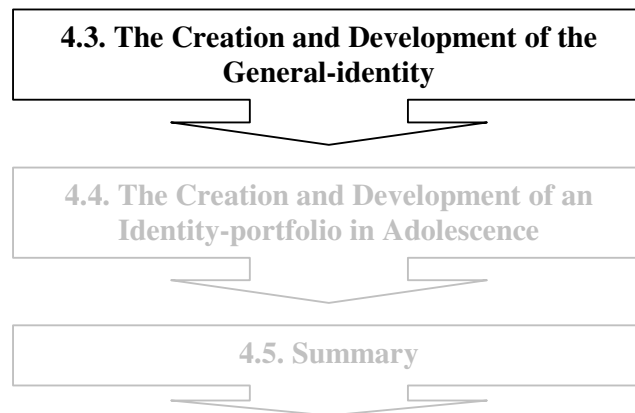## 4.4. The Creation and Development of an Identity-portfolio in Adolescence
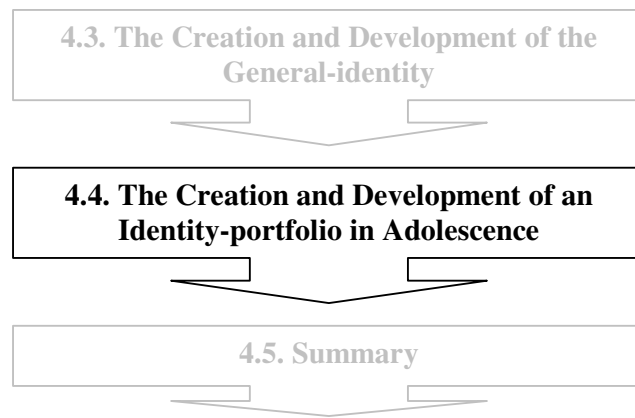
Figure 15. The structure of chapter four: 4.4. The creation and development of an identity-portfolio

This subsection (see figure 15) will present literature pertaining to the factors that influence the creation and development of a multidimensional identity-structure in adolescence. Adolescence is a period in an individual's life, in Western Culture in the current sociohistorical context, when there is much identity-work to accomplish. Once a child becomes an adolescent, as defined by Western Culture, there are many different reference groups, in many different contexts, to which they may become affiliated (Roberts and Friend, 1998). The contexts, as they will be referred to in this thesis, that exist in an individual's life have been referred to as life contexts (Roberts and Friend, 1998), domains (Campbell-Clark, 2000), role sets (Ashforth et al, 2000; Ashforth, 2001), social spheres (Frederikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001), psychological regions (Richter, 1990) and territories of the self (Nippert-Eng, 1996).

The process of defining oneself in terms of these contexts, for example defining oneself as a member of an organisation like a school or sports club, has an affect on the story or narrative the individual tells about themselves (McLean et al, 2007), and therefore on the individual's identity-structure (McCrae and Costa, 1990). As a consequence the individual's identity-structure will become increasingly differentiated as they necessarily construct a multidimensional identity-structure in order to deal effectively with the different roles and relationships that exist in their life. For example, a multidimensional identity-structure is created to deal with the difference between 'who they are' as a student at school and in their relationship with their friends (Harter et al, 1997; Santrock, 2006). This multidimensional identity-structure has been referred to as a parliament of selves (Mead, 1934, cited in Pratt and Foreman, 2000), a portfolio of selves (Ashforth, 2001, pp. 26), a portfolio of life roles (Louis, 1980), a self-theory (Santrock, 2006) a self-system, self-portrait (Harter, 1997) and personal epistemology (Harter, 1999). In this thesis where a multidimensional identity-structure is referred to it will generally be referred to as an identity-portfolio.

The individual, as they progress through adolescence, can be seen to have a general-identity and a number of context-specific-identities created for the specific contexts in the individual's life (Roberts and Donahue, 1994), for example family, school or a sports club (see figure 16). The difference between the general-identity and the context-specific-identities is how the individual describes themselves as the context-specific-identities will be described using their specific attributes, and the general-identity will be described using a unique combination of attributes from several context-specific-identities (Roberts and Donahue, 1994). This highlights the way in which discursive activity brings individual identity into being (Musson and Duberley, 2007). These identities will have core features that are necessary and
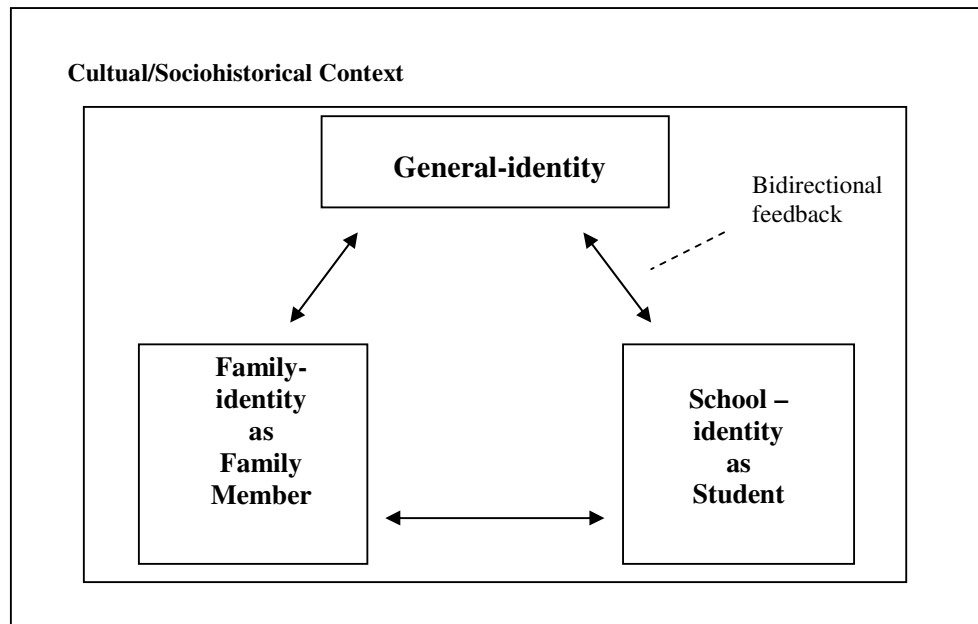
Figure 16. A multidimensional identity-structure: The identity-portfolio

defining of the identity, and peripheral features which are less important (Perry, 1997, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000). These identities may be viewed as existing in a hierarchy of identities, based on their salience to the individual (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980; 1987; Stryker and Serpe, 1982), and defined as the probability that any given identity will be utilised in a given situation, or across a number of situations (Burke and Reitzes, 1991; Serpe, 1987). People see themselves differently within the different contexts that exist in their life and they rate their attributes in some of these contexts higher than they do others (Roberts and Donahue, 1994). The salience, or subjective importance (Ashforth, 2001), of a context-specific-identity is a function of that individual's social and emotional commitment to that context (Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stryker, 1987; Van Dick, Christ, Stellmacher, Wagner, Ahlswede, Grubba, Hauptmeier, Hohfled, Moltzen and Tissington, 2004). These salient identities have also been referred to as valued personas (Adler and Adler, 1987, cited in Ashforth and Mael, 1989). At the top of this hierarchy is the

general-identity, which exists across the individual's life, regardless of situation or variable change. The identity-hierarchy would then work through the individual's context-specific-identities on the basis of their salience to the individual.

The individual's general-identity will provide input into the exact formation of a subsequently created context-specific-identity, and it is this that gives the individual their sense of continuity across different contexts, and time (Leonard et al, 1999). Individuals rely on what has happened in their past to make sense of their experiences and different events in the present and future (Musson and Duberley, 2007). McLean et al (2007) describe how an individual brings enduring aspects of themselves into the creation of a new situated story regarding who they are. This is caused by the self-fulfilling nature of the general-identity, as it constrains how new contexts may be perceived and experienced. However, as the individual remains in and develops that context-specific-identity it may provide input back to the general-identity (Leonard et al, 1999). For example, a wild and carefree young adult decides to join the army, and being a member of that army, which becomes an important or salient identity for the individual, impacts on the individual to the extent that this feeds back to their general-identity and causes them to no longer define themselves as carefree and wild but rather as disciplined and responsible. This change in the general-identity may also impact on the individual's other context-specific-identities, such that the individual is more disciplined and responsible in other contexts, such as in their interactions at home with their family or in social situations with their friends (see figure 16). A context-specific-identity may be relatively separate from an individual's general-identity, for example where an individual is not invested personally in that context-specfic-identity, or a context-specific-identity may be intertwined with an individual's general-identity, for example where an individual has been a homemaker for the

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majority of their adult life and has trouble seeing themselves in any other terms. This distinction is similar to Rousseau's (1998; Riketta, van Dick and Rousseau, 2006) distinction between situated identification, which involves a sense of belongingness to a collective triggered by situational cues, and deep structure identification, which involves a more fundamental connection between individual and collective and may involve altered self-schemas. It is also similar to Scott, Coman and Cheney's (1998) discussion of stable versus fleeting identification.

Identity-development during adolescence is influenced by an adolescent's: cultural and ethnic background (Markus and Kitayama, 1994); the socialization pressures that come from the different relational contexts in the adolescent's life, for example to attain autonomy from their family the adolescent must define themselves differently in their relationship with their peers; as well as being facilitated by further cognitive-developmental advances (Harter, 1999). Just as the individual's traits, competencies and values developed during childhood, in response to the feedback received from their primary reference group, the same now applies to the individual's response to feedback received from any new reference group, within a specific context. If there are aspects of the individual's identity-portfolio that are not reinforced by others this will also affect the development of the individual's identity-portfolio (McLean et al, 2007). This process may have begun in middle-late childhood but in adolescence occurs more rapidly. These experiences will greatly increase the complexity of the adolescent's identity-work as they define 'who they are' (Harter, 1999).

The adolescent will typically link themselves to reference groups in different contexts through the adoption of certain context-specific-identities/identification with those groups (Alvesson, 2004; Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Leonard et

al, 1999; Campbell-Clark, 2000). Individuals are motivated to do this because it is "an essential human desire to expand the self-concept to include connections with others and to feel a sense of belonging with a larger group" (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008). Identification is said to have occurred when the individual has come to define themselves, at least partially, in terms of the perceived context-specific-identity (Ashforth, 2001). The creation of context-specific-identities can be seen to have much to do with social psychology processes of group socialisation and (self-) categorisation and (self-) stereotyping (Aronson et al, 2005; Macrae et al, 1996). Much as the individual infers their own attributes through the observation of their freely chosen actions, they will also infer their attributes through the observation of the freely chosen actions of others with whom they feel they have a "merged identity" (Goldstein and Cialdini, 2007, pp. 403). The self-stereotyping process of perceiving oneself in terms of a group-identity, where one's identity is almost interchangeable with another group member, rather than perceiving oneself as an individual has been referred to as depersonalisation (Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003; Turner, 1982, cited in Haslam, 2002). Adopting these social-identities involves the adolescent placing themselves in certain social categories, at differing levels of abstraction, for example 'man', 'Irish', 'student' etc. (Haslam, 2002). This serves to locate the adolescent in the social world and allows them to answer questions, or at least attempt to, set by the philosophy of our culture, such as 'who am I?' Within the different parts of the adolescent's identity-portfolio this can then produce feelings of belonging (Macrae et al, 1996) or of loyalty (Adler and Adler, 1998) to a group, for example a group of school friends. The production of these feelings is based on perceived similarity with other people at a particular level of abstraction, for example

identifying with someone as a member of the same work organisation but not at the level of their work teams within the organisation (Haslam, 2002).

The link between the adolescent and a new reference group, much as it was with their primary reference group, is forged through the adoption of the group's norms and expectations (Alvesson, 2004; Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999; Campbell-Clark, 2000). This may be based on the individual's perception of these norms as, in some cases, it is the characteristics that the individual attributes to themselves in the specific context that produces their context-specific self-descriptions and hence their context-specific-identity (Burke and Tully, 1977). The individual only needs to perceive that they are "psychologically intertwined" with the fate of the group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, pp. 21) and that the group membership is psychologically meaningful to them (Haslam, 2002). The individual's behaviour for a context-specific-identity is guided by this process (Leonard et al, 1999; Stryker and Statham, 1985; Turner, 1982, cited in Haslam, 2003), as to enact a context-specific-identity by engaging in certain behaviours is to express a valued self-conception (Ashforth, 2001). Just as the individual attempts to maintain or enhance the coherence of their own self-perceptions, they will also act to "maintain or enhance the positive distinctiveness of the group" with which they identify (Haslam, 2003, pp. 84) as this now makes up a part of 'who they are'. A basic motive for group identification is that it provides a basis for thinking of oneself in a positive light by enhancing one's sense of collective self-esteem (Ashforth et al, 2008). The other group members will be seen as valued sources of social influence and it is likely that any disagreement with other members will be actively explained away in order to maintain harmony in the group (Haslam et al, 2003). An individual's identity-portfolio influences their behaviour, as was already described in terms of the general-identity. The identity-portfolio becomes

a source of motivation as individuals seek to reinforce their internalised view of themselves in the context of the various categories in which they place themselves, for example the category of group-member (Haslam, 2002; Leonard et al, 1999). Different self-definitions/identities, the utilisation of which is a function of context, bring with them different sets of needs (Haslam, 2002). Individuals are motivated to utilise different behaviours, goals, interpersonal style, language etc. in order to meet those needs (Haslam, 2002; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Leonard et al, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996). In terms of the influence exerted on the individual by external sources and other context-members the requirements an individual perceives they must meet, within a given context, motivates an individual towards certain 'ways of being' (Miner, 1993). An important aspect of Leonard et al's (1999) motivation metatheory is the proposition that people have different motivational-source-profiles, and different dominant-motivators, in different situations and for their different context-specific-identities. As the adolescent adopts traits, competences and values associated with a desired identity they must then justify the adoption of these attributes, which reinforces that identity, and this in turn reinforces the associated behaviours. For instance, an adolescent may have been raised to believe that stealing is wrong but then may join a peer group that engages in shoplifting. The individual may justify this stealing because they are becoming popular with their peers and are, in their opinion, not really inflicting harm on anyone. This justification will reinforce the identity and therefore reinforce the theft behaviour.

Within each perceived context in the individual's life the individual can be described in terms of the degree to which he/she is a peripheral or central participant in the sociocultural practices of that context (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wegner, 1991). A central participant is one who is engaged in full participation; has

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internalised the culture, language and values of the context, has shown that they have achieved competence in their responsibilities; have made connections with other central participants; and identify personally with the responsibilities involved, within that context. A peripheral participant is one who is ignorant of, or shows distain for, the culture and values of the context; has not achieved full competence in that context; doesn't have much interaction with central participants; and has little or no sense of identification with the responsibilities involved, within the context (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wegner, 1991). Campbell-Clark (2000) reduces these points regarding the differences between central and peripheral participation down to two main elements, influence and identity. If an individual is a central participant in a particular context they will have influence over the structure of the context and the other context-members, and will identify with the context, internalising the values of the context, tying their self-definition closely to that membership and hence finding meaning in that identification with, and responsibilities within, the context (Campbell-Clark, 2000).

Just as the general-identity is continually developing, so the adoption and development of a context-specific-identity is not a rigid, formulaic process. It is a process that is continuous and fluid as the individual moves through life, reflecting on 'who they are' (their identity-portfolio) and 'who they want to be' (their perceived future-identity-structures) (Leonard et al, 1999; Roberts and Donahue, 1994). Identity-development does not occur neatly in one, cataclysmic instance, but over time, with decisions not being permanent but having to be made continuously as the individual progresses through life (Kroger, 2003).

Identifying with a particular reference group is not the only way, described in the literature, in which an individual's identity may develop. Other "identificatory

possibilities" (Hodges, 1998, pp. 273) can be found in those individuals, groups, roles, contexts or ways of being with whom they disidentify. Disidentification (Ashforth, 2001; Elsbach, 1999; Hodges, 1998; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004; Musson and Duberley, 2007) is not the opposite of identification, rather it is a unique psychological state where one disconnects, typically negative, aspects of the context concerned from oneself. Disidentification can occur with a context in general or with specific elements that exist within the context (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). The concept of disidentification raises the issue of nonparticipation, where a conflict or identity-struggle (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) exists between an individual's activity and their identification (Hodges, 1998). For example, when an individual is engaged in an activity, within a context, where they disidentify with the activity, the context or both. For such an individual to remain in the context may be harmful to that context and the individual. Similar concepts are the not-me-self (Hewitt and Genest, 1990) and the undesired self (Ogilvie, 1987) where an individual utilises their most negatively held images of themselves and/or their future-identity-structures as an identity-resource (Haslam, 2003), or standard by which they can assess their life and well-being in the present, in terms of how close it is to the undesired way of being. Other forms of identification are ambivalent identification and neutral identification. Ambivalent identification, also called schizo or conflicted identification, where an individual simultaneously identifies and disidentifies with the context or aspects of the context. For example, an individual may support a political group's ideals but disidentify with their use of terrorist tactics. Neutral identification is where an individual's self-perception is based on an explicit absence of both identification and disidentification with the context. For example, a manager who takes a salient, self-

defining position of not taking sides in their work context (Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004).

4.4.1. The Development and Management of the Identity-portfolio in Early, Middle and Late Adolescence

Discussion of the identity-work that takes place during adolescence will now be presented in terms of the identity-work that takes place during early, middle and late adolescence (see figure 17). The process of constructing an identity-portfolio, in response to cognitive and social changes, has different affects on the adolescent depending on whether they are in early, middle or late adolescence (Harter, 1999). This is due to the fact that at these different times adolescents deal with the intrapsychic conflict or dissonance (Festinger, 1957) that arises from the often contradictory nature of their context-specific-identities, and hence their identity-portfolio, in different ways (Harter et al, 1997).

In early adolescence the ability to "construct rudimentary, abstract self-descriptors", by "integrating trait labels into higher-order generalizations", has been developed (Harter et al 1997, pp. 835; Bernstein, 1980). The adolescent has begun to think in more abstract, idealistic and self-reflective ways (Damon and Hart, 1988; Santrock, 2006). However, at this stage, they have not yet developed the ability to compare these abstract self-descriptors simultaneously, and therefore do not perceive, or at least are not overly concerned about, possibly contradictory attributes, for example 'shy' versus 'rowdy' (Bernstein, 1980; Harter, 1999; Harter and Monsour, 1992; Selman, 1980, cited in Damon and Hart, 1988). Fragmentation within the identity-portfolio is common in early adolescence (Harter and Monsour, 1992). As the adolescent produces multiple context-specific-identities, the opinions of

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significant others, the number of which is likely to increase at this time, are important as they are incorporated into the adolescent's 'sense of worth'. Any feedback, support or validation the adolescent receives from significant others will have a stronger impact on the adolescent's sense of self-worth in the context that contains these significant others, than in the other contexts within the adolescent's life. In this way the adolescent becomes sensitive to the "potentially different opinions and standards of significant others in each context" (Harter, 1999, pp. 65).

In order to illustrate the complexities of this process it is necessary to describe how, within the individual's identity-portfolio, one can not only describe certain contexts and their associated context-specific-identities, for example, school, family or work, but that one can describe further subtleties within such a context-specific-identity. For example, within a student identity an individual could have an identity as an academic student, an identity as a school athlete, and an identity as a mentor for a younger student (See figure 18). This demonstrates the customisation of identity for particular contexts at different levels of the identity-portfolio (Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann, 2006).
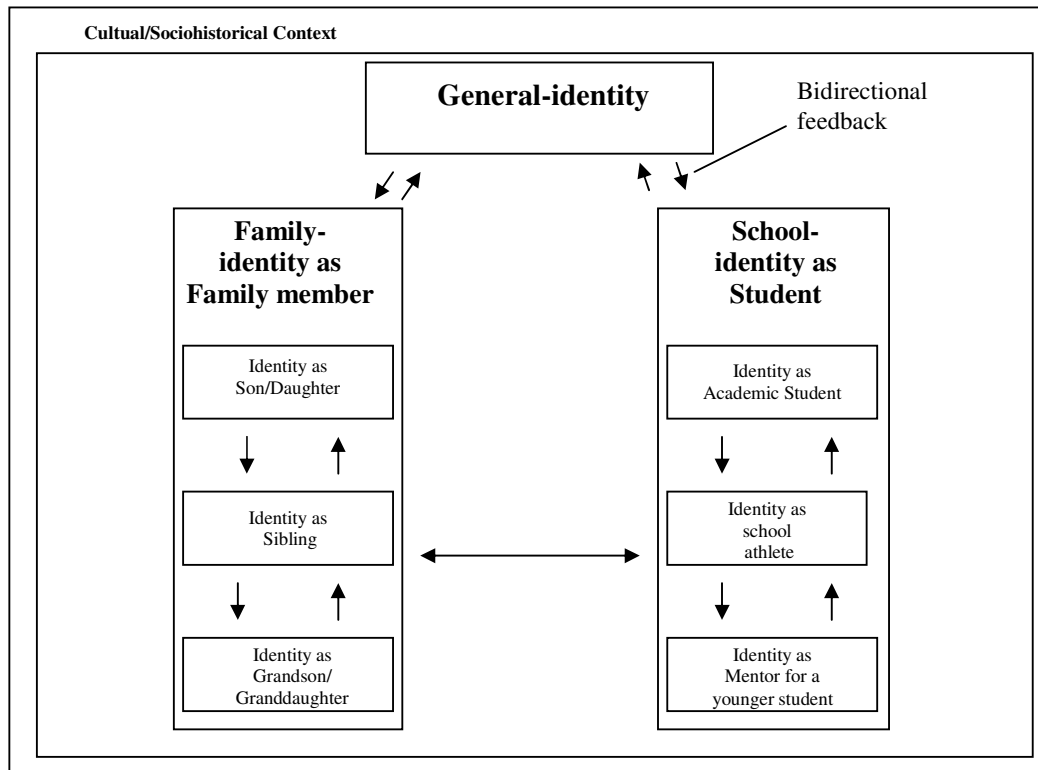
Figure 17. The identity-portfolio including further structure within perceived contexts

The mid-adolescence period can often be filled with doubt and confusion for the adolescent. Erikson termed the developmental stage in which he saw this turbulence occurring as identity versus identity confusion, where an adolescent will begin to realise that they are responsible for their own life and begins to explore who they want to be and what they are going to do in life in terms of their future-identity-structures. Erikson terms the gap, in Western culture, between the security of childhood and the freedom of adulthood as a psychosocial moratorium, where society gives adolescents time to engage in identity-exploration, for example to choose preferences in future career, fashion or sexuality (Santrock, 2006). When the individual reaches mid-adolescence they begin to develop the cognitive skills they need to take their abstract self-descriptors, in or between different contexts, and compare them (Harter, 1999). This causes the adolescent to feel a need to integrate

these perceived, multiple attributes and identities into a coherent narrative about themselves (Alvesson, 1994; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Horrocks and Callahan, 2006; Weick, 1996) in order that they can feel they have a unified and coherent sense of themselves. This will facilitate the occurrence of identity-struggle (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), experienced as intrapsychic conflict or dissonance (Festinger, 1957) because, at mid-adolescence, this individual has not yet developed the ability to take perceived contradictory identities, or elements of an identity and integrate them (Harter, 1999; Selman, 1980, cited in Damon and Hart, 1988). For example, "I'm depressed at school but that's not really me". This gives rise to what James (1890) referred to as the conflict of the many Me's. The adolescent, at this stage of their development will typically agonize over which representation of themselves is the 'real' them, but cannot resolve this conflict (Harter, 1999). This mid-adolescence conflict results in the adolescent being more concerned with perceived contradictions across contexts rather than within contexts.

Another source of confusion in mid-adolescence is that the individual is likely to receive different levels of validation or feedback from different significant others in different contexts. This will impact on the adolescent's ability to form a coherent sense of who they are as 'a person'. The mid-adolescent's views of their future-identity-structures is also affected as the processes that are occurring facilitate an examination of the discrepancies between their perceptions of their identity-portfolio in the present and how it may come to be in the future (Harter, 1999). This can be agonizing and perplexing for the adolescent (Santrock, 2006).

By late adolescence the individual's physical, cognitive and socioemotional development will typically have advanced to a point where they are able to manage their seemingly contradictory self-perceptions by consolidating and co-ordinating

them into their self-understanding (Damon and Hart, 1988) and their identity-portfolio. This is achieved through the adolescent being able to bring the different self-perceptions together under a higher order abstraction, for example "sometimes I'm moody and sometimes I'm depressed, so I guess I'm just temperamental" (Bernstein, 1980; Broughton, 1980, cited in Damon and Hart, 1988; Harter et al, 1997; Selman, 1980, cited in Damon and Hart, 1988). In this way the adolescent may normalize or even find value in the newly redefined inconsistency, as being different in the different contexts of their life is accepted as inevitable and even desirable (Harter et al, 1997). The adolescent becomes a better storyteller, being able to produce a more cohesive narrative about their life. The individual in late adolescence is typically involved in a process of actively deciding on 'who they are'. The adolescent achieves this by taking what they have learned from their own experiences and also the values, morals, behavioural norms etc. they have internalized in their dealings with others and re-conceptualising them as now coming 'from themselves'. In this way the adolescent comes to feel that they 'own' their choice of values etc., and thus these internalized self-guides are seen as being less and less to do with their social origins (Bernstein, 1980; Harter, 1999, Rosenberg, 1979). The adolescent will now, typically, have a clearer vision of their future-identity-structures (Markus and Nurius, 1986), that is to say who they want to be in the future, for example "I want to go to college and study to become a surgeon". This produces an individual in late adolescence/young adulthood who is likely to have accepted that it is good or valuable to be different in different contexts, but who also sees themselves as an individual whose values, beliefs etc. spring from themselves and 'who they are' rather than from external, social sources. The fact that the adolescent is taking ownership of their identity in this way may be due to an increase in the amount of autonomy they have as

older adolescents. Adolescents in Western culture are often free to choose different roles and form different identities as part of adolescent identity-exploration. The adolescent may select support groups where they will receive positive feedback and so maintain and enhance an associated identity. Such positive feedback becomes internalised by the individual and perceived as positive self-worth (Harter, 1999).

This, now older, adolescent will typically have facilitated a reduction in the dissonance (Festinger, 1957) brought on by perceived inconsistencies in their self-perceptions. However, the individual will experience dissonance in the future and this process of experiencing and dealing with dissonance can be expected to continue, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the experiences they have in their adult life.

The identity-development described above is a description of the typical movement across adolescence. These identity-developments may not necessarily emerge automatically, and even if they do occur there is no guarantee that the developments will result in positive outcomes for the individual, or that this will occur for a particular individual by a certain age (Harter, 1999). Erikson described those who do not resolve their adolescent identity crisis as suffering from identity confusion and said that these individuals would become isolated and withdrawn or will surrender themselves to external influences, for example peer groups, and lose their identity in the crowd (Santrock, 2006). A healthy identity is described by Adams, Gulotta and Montemayor (1992) as being flexible and adaptive, open to changes in society, in relationships, and in careers. Marcia (2002a, 2002b), in an extension of Erikson's work, identified four possible statuses of identity: identity-achievement, where an individual has gone through an exploration of different identities and has made a commitment to one; identity-diffusion, where there is neither an identity crisis nor commitment. Here there is an inability to 'take hold' of an identity to which they

can commit; identity-foreclosure, when a person has made a commitment without attempting identity-exploration; and identity-moratorium, where a person is actively involved in exploring different identities, but has not made a commitment to any particular source of self-definition. During late adolescence, some individuals at foreclosure or moratorium will become identity achieved as they encounter new contexts and opportunities for identity-exploration. However, an adolescent engaged in identity-exploration may regress if their explorations are punished or discouraged. Others will retain a rigid identity-portfolio in the face of "the expected emotional price of exploration" (Marcia, 2002b, pp. 13). The resolution to the identity-struggle involved in creating a late adolescent identity-portfolio forms the foundations for how that identity-portfolio will develop throughout subsequent life stages (Kroger, 2002b).

Adolescence, like other life stages, does not end according to some sharply defined criterion (Blos, 1979, cited in Golan, 1981). Levinson (1978, cited in Golan, 1981) terms this period the early adult transition, moving from pre- to early adulthood, and sees this period as a developmental bridge between the two eras. Levinson (1978, cited in Golan, 1981) proposes two major tasks that must be overcome in order to cross this bridge. The individual must first terminate their adolescent life structure and leave their pre-adult world behind them. The individual must then move forward and take a preliminary step into the 'adult world', exploring its possibilities and developing ideas about how they could participate within it by trying out some exploratory choices (identity-exploration), before entering fully into the 'adult world'.

4.5. Summary

The identity-work that the individual accomplishes during childhood and adolescence will impact on the form that individual's identity-structure will take throughout his/her life. In childhood an individual will form their general-identity, through interaction with/receiving feedback from their primary reference group. The individual will also develop views on their future-identity-structures. These self-perceptions can then be seen to act as a source of motivation, as the individual attempts to maintain the coherence and continuity of their self-perceptions over time. The development of the general-identity in childhood provides a base from which the identity-work that typically takes place in adolescence can start. During adolescence an individual develops an identity-portfolio, which is a hierarchal, multidimensional identity-structure. The identity-portfolio develops as the individual joins, and/or is socialised into, various other reference groups and necessarily creates different context-specific-identities in response. This process is complicated by the developmental changes that occur as the individual progresses from early to late adolescence, in normative development. The individual must be able to produce a narrative that consolidates and co-ordinates the perceived differences between the various context-specific-identities they use on a regular basis, in order that they can move forward in their adult life with a coherent sense of who they are and who they wish to become.

5. Identity in a Developmental

Context: Adulthood

5.1. The Position of Chapter Five within Section A
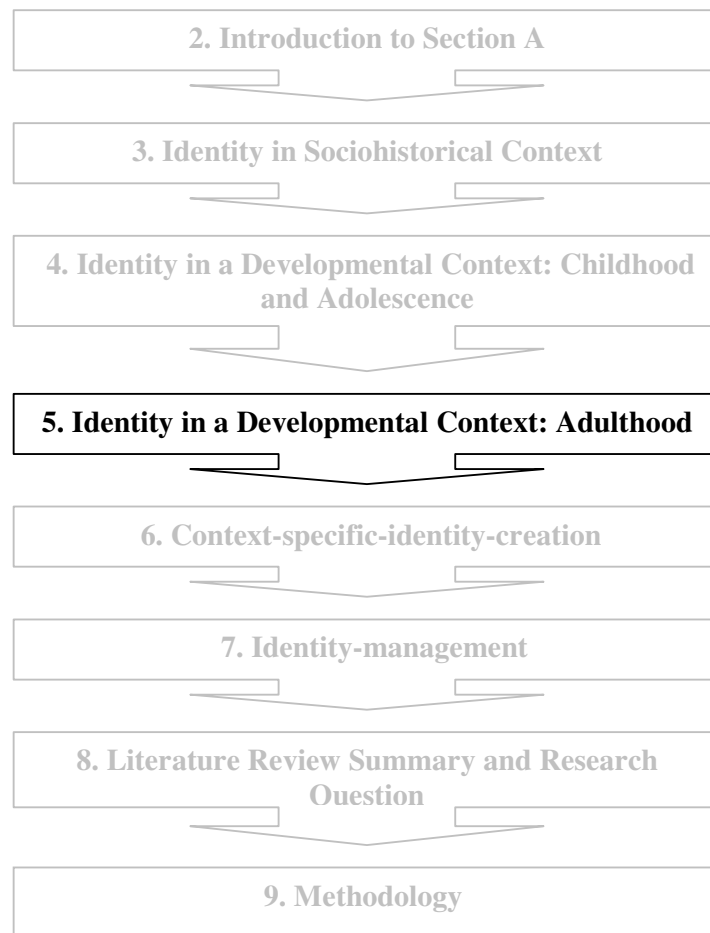
Figure 18. The structure of section A: Chapter five. Identity in a developmental context: adulthood

Chapter five (see figure 18) follows on from chapter four, with its discussion of identity-structure and processes in childhood and adolescence. This chapter concludes the presentation of literature focusing on identity-related issues in a developmental context by discussing identity-structure and processes in adulthood.

5.2. The Structure of Chapter five
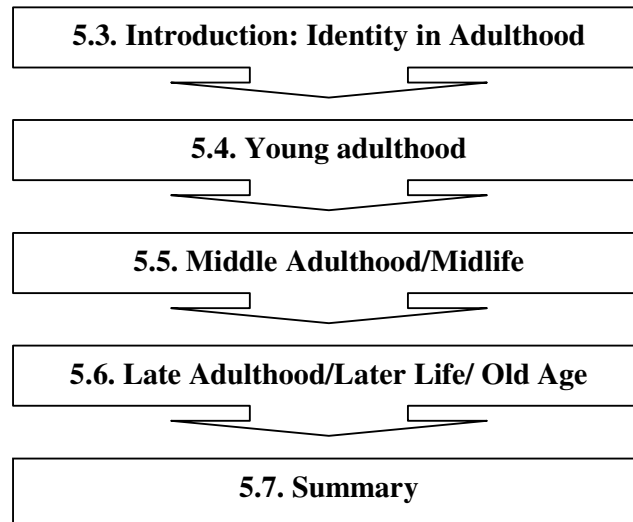
Figure 19. The structure of chapter five

This chapter (see figure 19) reviews the existing literature and research relating to identity in adulthood. Different factors affect an individual's ongoing identity-creation and identity-management processes, depending on the point in the adulthood portion of the lifespan at which the individual is located. This chapter is divided into an examination of young adulthood, midlife/middle adulthood and late adulthood/later life/old age.

5.3. Introduction: Identity in Adulthood

This chapter will present an introduction to how identity structures and processes in adulthood are viewed in the existing literature, before focusing on identity-related issues in the different stages of adulthood (see figure 20). This
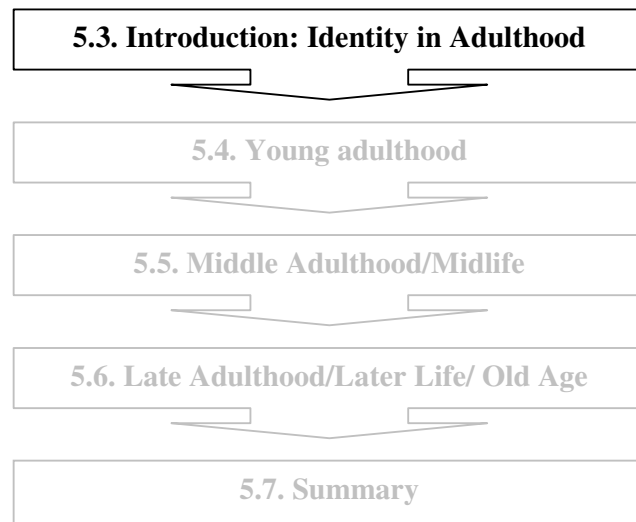
Figure 20. The structure of chapter five: 5.3 Introduction: Identity in adulthood

introduction brings together the points presented previously in chapters four and five with regard to the creation and development of individual identity.

An individual will typically, at the end of adolescence/start of young adulthood, have a general-identity and a number of context-specific-identities created for the contexts in the individual's life. These identities may be viewed as existing in identity-hierarchy, based on their salience or subjective importance to the individual. At the top of this hierarchy is the general-identity, which exists across the individual's life, regardless of situation or variable change. The identity-hierarchy would then work through the individual's context-specific-identities. The salience or subjective importance that a certain context-specific-identity has is a function of the social and emotional commitment the individual gives to that role. An individual's identity continues to fluidly develop throughout adulthood, while the individual will attempt to maintain their sense of coherence and continuity. While there are many different factors that influence an individual's identity-development in adulthood, there are

some typical events that influence individuals in their adult life in Western culture, and it is upon these that the following sections will focus (see figure 21).

Cultural/Sociohistorical context			
Life-Stage	**Early-Adulthood**	**Midlife**	**Later-Life**
Typical events that influence individuals during adulthood	Balance Intimacy and Independence: -with significant others/close partners -with regard to societal responsibilities Quarter Life Crisis Begin Career/Work as dominant context Marriage Becoming a Parent Geographic Moves	Dominance of Work and Family contexts 'Empty Nest' Becoming a Grandparent 'Boomerang Kids' Aging Parents Physical Changes Death of a Parent Retirement Relationship Stress	Retirement Death of Friends, Loved ones and/or Spouse Decreasing physical health and strength Reduced Income Dependency on others Fear of crime Fear of senility Caretaking of others Facing Death

Figure 21. Typical events that influence individuals during adulthood

5.4. Young Adulthood

This discussion of literature related to young adulthood identity begins the presentation of the existing literature related to identity-structures and processes in the different stages of adulthood (see figure 22). The existing literature that discusses identity-related issues in adulthood is more recent than that related to adolescence (Marcia, 2002b). There are various propositions about when adulthood begins (Golan, 1981), as this varies greatly between different cultures (Schaie and Willis, 1996). Within Western culture adulthood is seen to begin in the late teens, with the reaching of age eighteen conferring some legal status on the individual. Events that
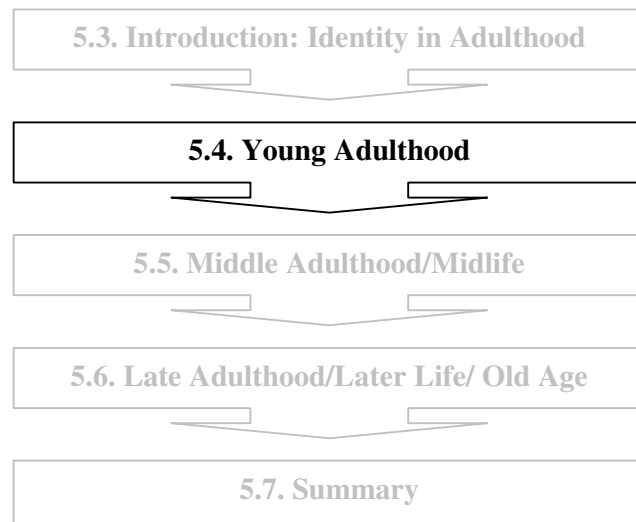
Figure 22. The structure of chapter five: 5.4. Young adulthood

symbolise entrance into adulthood in Western culture include the end of schooling, working and financial independence, living apart from family, marriage or meeting of a significant other and parenthood. Attending college has been suggested as an activity that cultivates intellectual development and fosters a progression in ways of thinking (Berk 1998). Many young adults would attend or have attended college, usually to obtain an education, attain specific career goals, or in an effort to figure out what they wish to do in their life (Seifert et al, 2000). The timing and sequence of these young adulthood activities will vary for different individuals (Schaie and Willis, 1996).

An individual in young adulthood, in current Western culture, will typically have to manage a complex identity-portfolio. The degree of difficulty experienced in terms of identity-management may vary considerably. For example the individual may have a clear, well managed context-specific-identity in terms of being a spouse but have great difficulty with their context-specific-identity as an employee in a work context (Whitbourne, 1986a; 1986b).

Young adulthood can bring with it an identity-struggle (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) based on a conflict between independence/isolation and intimacy/interdependence, which is an Eriksonian dyad (Golan, 1981; Marcia, 2002b; McIlveen and Gross, 1999). Adolescents work towards breaking away from their family in order to gain the independence necessary to develop their identity-portfolio. In young adulthood this independence may have been achieved, to a greater or lesser extent. However, the individual is now in a position where they want or need intimacy but also see it as a threat to their acquired independence. During young adulthood the individual has demands placed on them by society, which can create a sense of interdependence between them and society. Intimacy, in this context, does not have to mean physical or sexual relationships, merely that there is a connection between two individuals where they influence each other's identity-development (Berk, 1998; Marcia, 2002b). However, young adulthood is a period when it is common for individuals to meet significant others, if not life partners. Individuals in close or intimate relationships can have a big impact upon each other's identity-development. They mould or sculpt each other's identity-structure and future-identity-structures, as these partnerships typically represent highly salient contexts for those involved (Drigotas et al, 1999). How successfully the individual manages this conflict between independence/isolation and intimacy/interdependence will impact on their ability to manage their identity-portfolio in midlife (Marcia, 2002b; Schaie and Willis, 1996). Those who are identity-achieved at late adolescence would be expected to go on to establish intimate relationships in young adulthood, due to the facilitatory nature of a secure sense of self-definition on whether the individual will risk vulnerability and mutuality with another. Establishing an intimate connection with another, or others, in

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young adulthood can then provide a strong base for becoming a caring individual in midlife (Marcia, 2002b).

Some individuals, in their twenties and thirties, experience a 'quarter-life crisis' as they struggle to find fulfilment in their life, for example satisfaction in work or in a meaningful relationship (Robbins and Wilner, 2001). As with any identity-crisis or transitional period that occurs during adulthood the individual may regress in terms of their identity-structure, in identity-status theory terms perhaps regressing from identity-achievement to identity diffusion, as the individual permits the existing structure to "fall apart so that a new structure can emerge" (Marcia, 2002b, pp. 15). It is such crises or transitional periods that mark the different periods of adulthood from one another, and so one would expect such identity reconstruction to occur as an individual enters a new psychosocial stage (Marcia, 2002b).

Work is a dominant part of people's lives in Western society and it can exert influence at every level of an individual's functioning, and will typically form a critical part of an individual's identity-portfolio (Berk, 1998; Frydenberg and Lewis, 2002). Most individuals will begin working in young adulthood, if they have not already (Berk 1998; Seifert et al, 2000). An individual's choice of career will be influenced by the previous two decades of socialisation by their family, friends and schooling as to what represents appropriate work or career choices for them. An individual may explore a number of different occupations, building up knowledge and skills with which to make a mature occupational choice (Beck, 1998; Golan, 1981), in a process of identity-exploration. Subsequently the individual's choice of work or career will influence their sense of themselves, their identity-portfolio, in the future. A critical source of stress for young adults comes from their work or career (Lachman, 2004).

An event that can often occur in young adulthood is becoming a parent. Entering parenthood can have a significant effect on self-perception as an individual becomes a parent and in many cases a marriage or couple becomes a family (Birch and Malim, 1988). However, people have been shown to prepare less for this role than they do for other roles in adulthood (Seifert et al, 2000). A geographical move is also something that is relatively common for young adults, and will bring with it the need to leave their life as it currently is and then engage in identity-work as they get over the shock of being in a new environment and adapt to the new set of social groups they will have to interact with in the new location (Berk, 1998; Golan, 1981).

The 'search for identity', or the engagement in identity-work, should be seen as a lifelong process, rather than something that occurs in a developmental stage or phase such as adolescence or young adulthood. As individuals move through their life, experiencing life events, they will constantly redefine themselves and re-structure their identity-portfolio (Kroger and Haslett, 1991; Marcia, 2002b; Waterman and Archer, 1990, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Whitbourne, 1986a; 1986b). Choices made in young adulthood, in terms of relationships, occupation or geographical location, will impact on the individual's future. The choices made with regard to lifestyle in young adulthood, for example choices made with regard to sexual behaviour, smoking, drug abuse, exercise and diet, will impact on their health in midlife and later life (Berk, 1998; Lachman, 2004; Seifert et al, 2000).

5.5. Middle Adulthood/Midlife - The afternoon of life (Jung, 1933)
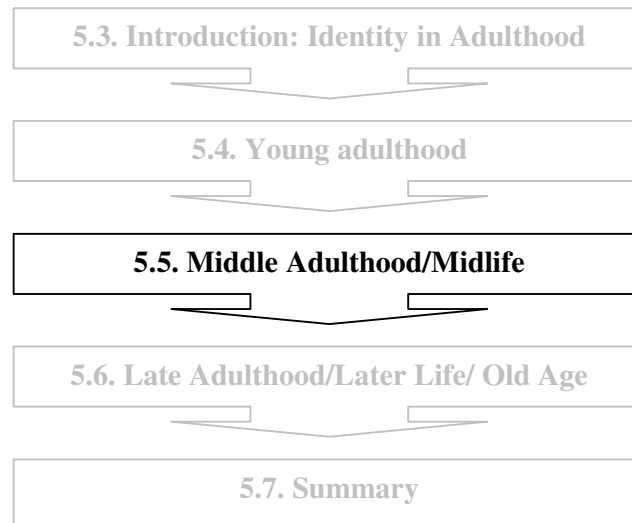
Figure 23. The structure of chapter five: 5.5. Middle adulthood/Midlife

This subsection (see figure 23) will discuss several factors that should be taken into account when discussing identity-related issues in midlife. Cultural differences must be taken into account when defining midlife, as it does not exist as a concept in all cultures (Schweder, 1998), and is a twentieth-century development in Western culture (Lawrence, 1980). There is also no clear demarcation of midlife (Staudinger and Bluck, 2002). Midlife is generally described as beginning at the age of forty and ending at sixty or sixty-five, although many people do not describe themselves as being middle-aged until a much older age. As many people in Western Culture are living for longer and remain healthier for a greater proportion of their lives, midlife may stretch further into later life (Berk, 1998; Lachman, 2004; Seifert et al, 2000). Those individuals who are currently in midlife are members of the baby boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964), and have seen many societal changes in their lifetime. Due to the numbers of baby boomers there has been increased competition for resources and jobs, they have had fewer children at later ages than

their parents, and female members of this generation have had increased access to education and high-status occupations. This has resulted in increased numbers of women in the workplace, which has led to difficulties in the management of work and family in dual career couples, largely due to society not moving away from its patriarchal structures in order to accommodate this change (Lachman, 2004). Because there are growing numbers of baby boom women in the midlife transition (Morgan, 1998), which is itself extending congruously (Sheehy, 1995), contempory women are pioneers of this period of life having no previous generations of women to use as role models (Evans, 2008). Therefore the identity-related-issues facing individuals currently in midlife may be different from those that came before them.

Midlife presents new challenges to be negotiated by the individual, which were not present during young adulthood, and also represents a period of time where one may be preparing for old age. Although there are many commonalities in what individuals experience during midlife, these experiences will vary due to certain factors, for example one's gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, culture, marital status, parental status, employment status and the state of one's health (Lachman, 2004; Staudinger and Bluck, 2001). Certain life events are associated with becoming middle-aged, for example teenage children leaving the family home (the empty-nest) (Jacques, 1965, cited in Lachman, 2004), becoming a grandparent, reaching career goals, experiencing menopause (Evans, 2008; Seifert et al, 2000); adjusting to aging parents, relating to one's spouse as a person (relationship stress is salient for middle-aged adults), assuming civic and social responsibility and developing leisure-time activities, for example starting to paint, write or pursue some other intellectual endeavour) (Havighurst, 1972, cited in Schaie and Willis, 1996). As these events, and

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how an indivudal engages with them, will impact on, shape and mould the individual's identity-portfolio as they progress through midlife.

With regard to the identity-work (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) that must be carried out during this period, in Eriksonian terms, an adult at midlife faces an identity-struggle of generativity, trying to be the best at what you do, versus stagnation, failing to 'generate' or grow as a person. Successful resolution of this identity-struggle is seen as coming from the preference of optimism over pessimism and problem solving over complaining (Berk, 1998; Birch and Malim, 1988; Marcia, 2002b). Generativity is associated with caring for others (Schaie and Willis, 1996), for example in parenting and societal involvement, which demonstrates the important role that commitment to others plays in the development of well-being in midlife (McAdams, 2001; Staudinger and Bluck, 2001). As previously discussed an individual's success in resolving the identity-struggle of generativity will be influenced on how previous identity-struggles have been resolved at earlier stages. It is possible for an individual to 'catch up' on the resolution of previously unresolved or negatively resolved identity-struggles, however this would require a great deal of identity-work and accommodating external circumstances (Marcia, 2002b).

The individual's perception of him/herself as a coherent and consistent entity serves as a foundation for their experiences during midlife (Lachman, 2004). The state of an individual's identity-portfolio is very important in midlife, as it acts as a resource for responding to the stresses that arise from the physical changes and social situations inherent in that period of life. Those individuals that feel they have achieved a sense of mastery and control are better equipped to meet the challenges of midlife and are better able to develop effective, adaptive strategies for reducing or dealing with stress (Lachman and Firth, 2004). In middle adulthood an individual's

future-identity-structures become less in number and also become more modest and concrete, as they no longer feel they want to be 'the best' or the most successful but would rather be competent in the contexts that exist in their life (Berk, 1998). Stress management techniques, for example re-evaluating the situation, focusing on events you can control, setting reasonable goals and/or having an optimistic outlook on life, or relaxation techniques, for example meditation, can be used to cope with the stresses of midlife (Berk, 1998). Individuals in midlife utilise their previous life experience, as interpreted through the constraining, self-fulfilling nature of the general-identity, as a resource in choosing adaptive strategies (Aldwin and Levenson, 2001). Decisions regarding health-related lifestyle choices will affect individual's health in later life (Lachman and Weaver, 1998a; 1998b; Windsor et al, 2008). Individuals at midlife often demonstrate high levels of mastery in relation to their ability to successfully cope with stressors and with regard to their accumulated experiences of juggling different roles in the different contexts that exist in their lives (Lachman, 2004).

In Western culture the midlife period is typically dominated by the contexts of work and family (Staudinger and Bluck, 2001), and these contexts are likely to have related context-specific-identities that may dominate the indivual's identity-portfolio. In both work and family contexts middle-aged adults serve as an important resource for members of younger generations, sharing with them their knowledge and experience and transmitting their values to the next generation (McAdams, 2001). This is in terms of: the practical problem solving ability; practical intelligence (the application of intellectual skills to everyday activities); and expertise/wisdom (referring to behaviours that require intelligence as well as specialized experience in specific domains) they have built up in their life (Berk, 1998; Seifert et al, 2000). Some individuals at midlife will have stable careers while others will experience job

instability (Lachman, 2004). Issues such as: fear of job loss; plateauing ("reaching a point of constricted occupational opportunity, usually in mid-career, resulting in boredom and feelings of stagnation") (Seifert et al, 2000, pp. 538); and burnout (disillusionment and exhaustion on the job, caused by stress from multiple role commitments or discrimination) (Berk, 1998; Seifert et al, 2000) can affect individuals' sense of themselves, both in terms of the work context specifically and themselves in general, at midlife.

Retirement is an event that may occur during midlife (Berk, 1998; Kim and Moen, 2001; Staudinger and Bluck, 2001), although middle-aged adults usually spend more time planning a two-week holiday than they do planning their retirement (Berk, 1998). Retirement can represent a major life change, and can be a positive or negative event for the individual. Therefore retirement may cause an individual to experience a significant idenity-struggle that they then must deal with in order to retain a sense of coherence and consistency. Adjustment to retirement begins long before it actually occurs and factors such as the individual's perception of their own parents' handling of retirement, the individual's locus of control and how much they have planned for their retirement affect the degree of anxiety the individual experiences when they do retire (Atchley, 1991, cited in Berk, 1998; MacEwen, Barling, Kelloway, and Higginbottom, 1995; Pery, 1995, cited in Berk, 1998). Whether an individual's mental abilities are maintained or deteriorate in midlife will depend on whether the individual likes to learn new things, go to new places and adapts easily to change (Seifert et al, 2000). Some adults at midlife may decide to enter into educational programs, usually in preparation for careers or career changes (Berk, 1998; O'Connor, 1987, cited in Seifert et al, 2000) or as a means of improving themselves (Berk, 1998; Campbell et al, 1980, cited in Seifert et al, 2000).

Midlife is a period in which adults often find themselves the 'sandwich generation' or suffering from middle-generation squeeze, between their children and their parents (Staudinger and Bluck, 2002), both of whom must be dealt with along with any challenges the individual may otherwise have (Schaie and Willis, 1996). For many individuals midlife will also often bring with it a reduction in parenting responsibilities, and this has been theorised to cause both feelings of depression and loneliness, primarily by women in their identity as mother, and feelings of renewed freedom and potential, as 'empty nest' syndrome sets in (Seifert et al, 2000; Schaie and Willis, 1996). Individuals at midlife, especially women, may foresee this situation arising and organise other sources of self-satisfaction 'before it's too late' (Golan, 1981). However, it is likely that parenting is perceived as a lifelong role, but that there are changes in the relationships with children during midlife. The 'empty nest' will be perceived by the individual in different ways due to the self-perceptions they have built up before this point in their lifespan, and the degree to which they have psychologically invested in contexts outside of the family/parenting context (Schaie and Willis, 1996). Individuals at midlife may also, not only have to go through the experience of having an 'empty nest', but may also have to contend with 'boomerang kids' who return home later in life (Lachman, 2004). In midlife individuals will often be able to evaluate how their children have done and such evaluations affect those individual's evaluations of their own lives and wellbeing (Keyes and Ryff, 1999; Seltzer and Ryff, 1994).

Caring for ageing parents has become a normative part of middle adulthood, counter to the myth of aging parents being perceived as a burden to be moved into an 'old folks home' as soon as possible (Berk, 1998; Schaie and Willis, 1996). Many elderly people, even those who are disabled, live with, or are cared for by their

families, although it is women in these families that do the bulk of the caring, especially those with lower levels of education (Schaie and Willis, 1996). These have been referred to as the 'women in the middle' (Brody, 1990, cited in Schaie and Willis, 1996). Being a carer can impact on the individual's identity-portfolio in different ways. Carers of elderly parents or relatives can experience emotional strain, restrictions on their time and freedom and/or conflict with other family members. Carers may also experience feelings of self-satisfaction and increased self-respect, because of their perception that they are fulfilling their responsibilities and overcoming a personal challenge (Schaie and Willis, 1996). The death of a parent during midlife is becoming a significant life-event associated with this period (Seifert et al 2000; Schaie and Willis, 1996), due to increases in life expectancy. The identity-work associated with such a life-event will impact on the structure of the identity-portfolio. The death of both parents removes a historical source of emotional support as the individual can no longer fall back on the family or parental home, and this is also seen to symbolise the individual becoming a member of the 'elder generation' (Schaie and Willis, 1996).

Midlife is a period that involves managing the identity-portfolio and attempting to prevent and/or solve conflicts between identities. Midlife may be an impetus for change in an individual's life, but not necessarily a crisis. The 'mid-life crisis' is a common stereotype in Western culture that is not an accurate portrayal of this period, as it is a relatively uncommon occurrence in mid-life (Wethington, Kessler and Pixley, 2004). Middle age is more associated with positive, desirable characteristics, for example competence, being responsible, being knowledgeable, and powerful (Lachman, Lewkowicz, Marcus and Peng, 1994). "With the passage of lifetime and experience, identities become deeper and richer" (Marcia, 2002b, pp. 17).

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Where a crisis does occur it may represent an experience that is overcome and used, by the individual, to grow and develop. Again the individual may have to go through a period of letting existing identity-structure 'fall away' in order for a new, or re-formulated, identity-structure to emerge (Avis, 1999, cited in Willis and Reid, 1999; Marcia, 2002b). A crisis may also occur within a particular context in an individual's life, for example in their work context, while not seriously affecting other contexts in their life. Usual sources of such crises are major life events such as illness, divorce, job loss or financial problems, which can occur at any time in adulthood (Wethington et al, 2004). Another perspective on the 'midlife crisis' is that, since it has become a popular concept in society, it has become something that individuals can use to tell the story of their midlife (Farrell, Rosenberg and Rosenburg, 1993). The crisis becomes a flexible, core story around which they can arrange a personal narrative of their adult life, whether they actually experienced a crisis (in terms of a period of decreased life satisfaction etc.) or not. However, a crisis at midlife may represent more of a challenge for the individual then crises that occur earlier in the lifespan, as it requires more courage to re-formulate an identity when one is forty or sixty than when one is twenty-five (Marcia, 2002b).

The choices made in middle adulthood, in terms of relationships, occupation, geographical location, will impact on the individual's future. The choices made with regard to lifestyle in middle adulthood, for example choices made with regard to sexual behaviour, smoking, drug abuse, exercise and diet, will impact on their health in later life (Beck, 1998; Lachman, 2004; Seifert et al, 2000). The future of the concept of midlife will depend on future biological advances and social changes. For example, future decisions on the age of retirement or the age at which people become

entitled to social welfare/social security/old age pension will affect perceptions and definitions of midlife (Schaie and Willis, 1996).

5.6. Late Adulthood/Later Life/ Old Age
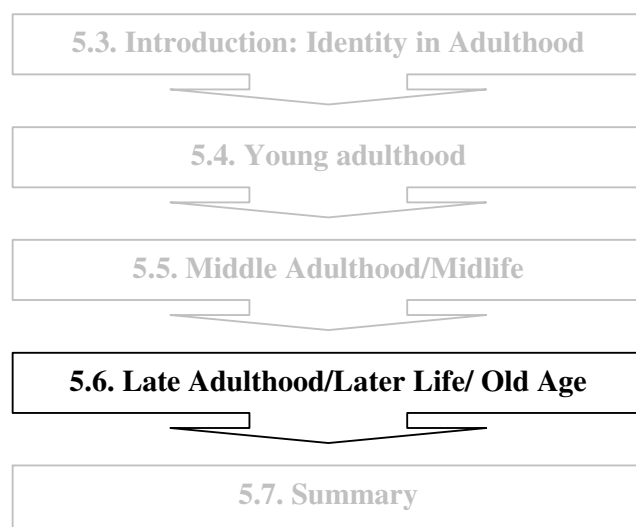
Figure 24. The structure of chapter five: 5.6. Late adulthood/later life/old age

The final period of adulthood that will discussed in terms of identity-related issues is late adulthood/later life/old age (see figure 24). There is scant research and literature related to this developmental period, in comparison to other developmental periods (Kroger, 2002a; 2002b). In the past only a small fraction of people reached old age, and even for them it represented only a small portion of their life. In Ireland in 1926 life expectancy at birth for males was 57.4 and 57.9 for females (CSO, 2008). However, most people can now expect to reach old age, which can represent up to a third of their lifespan (Berk, 1998; Schaie and Willis, 1996; Seifert et al, 2000). Life expectancy at birth in Ireland in 2002 was 75.1 for males and 80.3 for females (CSO, 2008). Life expectancy has increased in European Union countries in the last half

century and this increase is ongoing, for example, average life expectancy from 1995 to 2005 increased by three years for men and two years for women (Eurostat, 2007). Reaching old age will depend on the lifestyle choices made by an individual in earlier life-stages, as well as in late adulthood. Entry into later-life will be determined to a greater or lesser extent by cultural factors, socioeconomic status and one's own perception of how old one feels (Golan, 1981). Individuals in later-life, defined as 65 years old onwards, are often viewed as a homogenous group, when in fact they are more accurately viewed as being in various sub-categories of later-life. These subcategories can be viewed as young-old (65-75 years old), the old-old (75/80-about 90) and the very-old/oldest-old (over 80 or 90) (Schaie and Willis, 1996). Kroger, (2002b) divides late adulthood into young or younger old, age sixty-five to seventy-five, and very old, from seventy-six onwards. The younger old are likely to be adjusting to changes in their identity-portfolio, whereas the very old are often coping with identity related issues that are more related to a changed biology and physical decline (Erikson, 1997).

In terms of the identity-work (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) that must be accomplished during this life-stage, from an Eriksonian perspective, late adulthood is a time when an individual has to balance the search for 'ego-integrity' with a sense of despair (Golan, 1981; Marcia, 2002b; Schaie and Willis, 1996). Achieving 'ego-integrity' involves accepting life for what it has been. If the despair involved in reviewing one's life, including one's own failures or the failures of others can be accepted along with the conflict caused by the deaths of friends and loved ones, then wisdom, as Erikson defines it, will emerge (Schaie and Willis, 1996). The concept of successful aging, from a psychological point of view, is the maintenance of psychological adjustment and wellbeing across the lifespan (Berk, 1998; Seifert et al,

2000). This may be difficult to accomplish in late adulthood, where the continuity of one's identity-portfolio must be maintained in the face of loss and one's own impending death (Kroger, 2002b). Marcia (2002b) proposes that individuals who have been nonexploratory in their approaches to previous psychosocial stages and identity-struggles would not be expected to engage in the identity-work necessary to achieve integrity. Individuals in later adulthood may engage in reminiscence or storytelling about people and past events. These activities can be positive and adaptive as the individual develops their self-awareness and self-respect, and passes on these stories or experiences to the next generation (Boylin, Gordon and Nehrke, 1976; Lewis, 1971). This storytelling may also function to aid the individual as they attempt to 'tie up the package' of their life, perhaps by integrating the important experiences of a lifetime into one creative piece, for example an autobiography (Kroger, 2002b). Older adult's dreams have been found to include more autobiographical content (Cappeliez, 2008).

Kroger (2002b) compares the period of late adolescence with that of late adulthood, in current Western culture. Both are described as transitional periods, one entering adulthood and the other exiting adulthood, and life, which both "involve considerable change in biological, psychological and sociocultural roles" (pp. 97). These changes demand new identity considerations and consolidations. Individuals in late adolescence and late adulthood are likely to be striving for more independent and interdependent ways of living, to be renegotiating relationships with their family and other social institutions. However, differences are also highlighted. Whereas an adolescent may be engaged in a quest for a meaningful philosophy of life, an individual in late adulthood will be engaged in a quest for a philosophy of meaning to their own life (Kroger, 2002b). In terms of an individual's future-identity-structures in

late adulthood there is a focus on the present and on stability in current functioning (Ryff, 1991). This represents the biggest difference between late adolescence and late adulthood. While in late adolescent an individual will typically be assessing the possible future-identity-structures towards which they might aspire, in late adulthood identity-work will principally involve finding meaning in their current identity-portfolio and meaningful ways to express themselves in the present (Kroger, 2002b).

Physically, individuals in late adulthood will typically experience a slowing in motor responses, sensory processes and intellectual functioning, which may impact on an individual's self-perceptions. Skin, bone and muscle all show age-related changes (Akyol, 2007), although these will depend on how well the skin was protected in earlier life, and whether an individual engages in regular exercise (Morley and Flaherty, 2002). Individuals in late adulthood commonly suffer from chronic illnesses that cannot be cured but only managed (Berk, 1998; Seifert et al, 2000). Cognitively, the accumulation of wisdom, expert knowledge and good judgement about important but perhaps uncertain matters that occur in life are positive changes associated with later life, and some older adults perform at near peak-levels on wisdom-related tasks (Berk, 1998). However, cognitive function can suffer from age-related changes in the brain, and due to organic brain syndromes, such as Alzheimer's disease (Seifert et al, 2000).

In their attempts to maintain a coherent and consistent identity-portfolio individuals in later adulthood may have to establish an explicit association with their age-group, adopt and adapt societal roles in a flexible way and establish satisfactory physical living arrangements (Havighurst, 1972, cited in Schaie and Willis, 1996). Individuals in late adulthood will be affected by their living conditions, specifically the amount of control they have over where and how they live. Individuals in late

adulthood may: live independently in their own homes, referred to as 'aging in place', this is the ideal for many individuals; they may live in assisted living or semi-independent living conditions; or in long-term care/nursing homes (Berk, 1998; Kroger and Adair, 2008; Seifert et al, 2000). Often the reason for not aging in place is that disease, frailty or economic reasons has meant that they no longer have control over their surroundings and they wish to move somewhere else over which they have personal control. However, when the elderly perceive that they no longer have control over their lives or living conditions this has negative affects on their physical and mental health (Berk, 1998; Seifert et al, 2000). The impact, on an individuals sense of themselves, of transitions such as entering into long-term care can be affected by the individual's control over certain cherished objects that act as links to the individual's past (Kroger and Adair, 2008). Such memorabilia, for example photographs or paintings of family members or the self at various points of one's life, function as visible, physical expressions of the continuity of one's identity. Issues that may be faced in old age are those associated with dependency on others, both in reality and in terms of feared possible futures, in relation to: financial concerns, for example if one outlives one's retirement fund; mobility, for example if one breaks their hip; serious health concerns, for example if one becomes senile; as well as the task of facing ones own death (Golan, 1981).

Retirement can often function as a means of moving an individual into, or at least towards old age. This life event can impact both on the individual themselves as well as others in that individual's life, for example their spouse (Berk, 1998; Golan, 1981). Many individuals, however, continue to work well into late adulthood (Seifert et al, 2000). In terms of how an individual adapts their identity-portfolio in response to retirement, the best predictor of life satisfaction after retirement is their level of life

satisfaction before leaving paid employment (Reitzes, Mutran and Fernandez, 1996a, 1996b). Individuals in late adulthood may experience ageism, "stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old" (Seifert et al, 2000, pp. 590), as both negative stereotypes such as feeble, slow and grey-haired, and positive stereotypes such as sweet, caring and pleasant, attempt to place individuals in late adulthood into a neat category. This social feedback will impact on the individual's sense of themselves and may potentially be internalised in to the individual's identity-portfolio. Some adults in later life may decide to enter into educational programs, usually in order to learn for the sake of learning as their careers are usually at an end (Berk, 1998; O'Connor, 1987, cited in Seifert et al, 2000). This may represent a return to a 'back burner' issue that the individual did not have time to examine or deal with in their past. The return to education may represent a public engagement with the individuals own interests, such as educational disciplines, voluntary work or engagement in a pastime. This is especially salient for women who are engaging in these public activities having moved on from their former roles as homemakers (Kroger, 2002b).

In later adulthood, when one's parents are most likely dead, especially by the old-old and oldest-old stages (Golan, 1981), one's siblings and friends may be dead or ailing, one has retired from work and, most significantly, one's spouse may be dead, loneliness can be both a tremendous problem and fear. Loneliness is a dependency issue as the individual must turn to people other than to those who made up their traditional support network, as they may be dead or ailing, for example to their adult children and their families (Schaie and Willis, 1996; Seifert et al, 2000). This can impact more on women, who tend to outlive their husbands. Women also take on more of the burden of taking care of frail spouses or siblings in old-age, which

reduces the freedom of many older women, as they become part-time or full-time carers (Schaie and Willis, 1996; Seifert et al, 2000). Depression is a common psychiatric compliant of elderly adults (Gatz et al., 1996, cited in Seifert et al, 2000), which can result in many adverse symptoms, for example loss of interest or pleasure in activities, feeling worthless and thoughts of suicide or suicidal behaviour (Seifert et al, 2000). These issues would impact heavily on an individual's sense of themselves, and would represent an important identity-struggle in later life.

In terms of coping successfully with the aging process, individuals should, in a general sense, selectively choose where and how they invest their effort and choose alternative strategies and activities that will make up for those that have to be left behind due to the stage of life the individual now finds themselves (Baltes and Baltes, 1990; Carstensen, 1992). Maintaining existing relationships and, where this is not possible, forming new, intimate relationships can be a source of resiliency for those in late adulthood (Kroger, 2002b; Newsom and Schulz, 1996). Being accepting of change, even where it involves decline is associated with a greater sense of well-being and good adjustment in old age (Ryff, 1989).

5.7. Summary

This chapter highlights that an individual's identity-portfolio continues to fluidly evolve throughout an individual's adult life. Different factors will typically affect identity-development depending on whether the individual is in early, mid or late adulthood, resulting in specific types of identity-work being necessary at these different stages. In any analysis of identity-structures, identity-creation processes or identity-management processes in adulthood, the typical factors that will be affecting

the individual must be taken into account. However, each individual's identity-portfolio will also develop in response to his/her own life experiences.

The next two chapters, which discuss the creation of a context-specific-identity and identity-management, will assume that the hypothetical individual discussed is in adulthood.

6. Context-specific-identity-creation

6.1. The Position of Chapter Six within Section A

2. Introduction to Section A

3. Identity in Sociohistorical Context

4. Identity in a Developmental Context: Childhood and Adolescence

5. Identity in a Developmental Context: Adulthood

6. Context-specific-identity-creation

7. Identity-management

8. Literature Review Summary and Research Question

9. Methodology
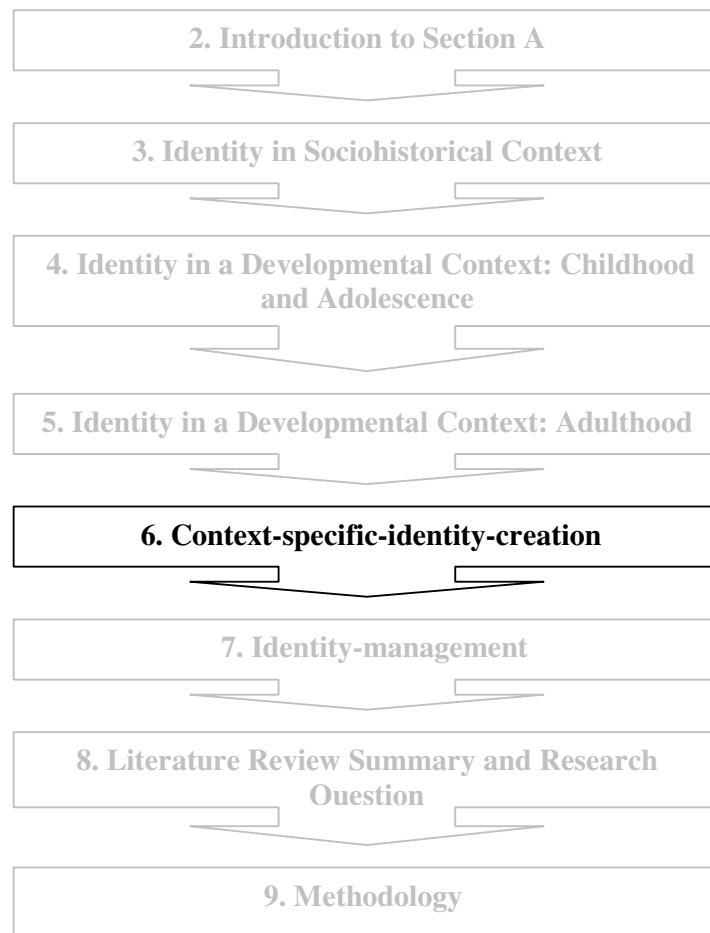
Figure 25. The structure of section A: Chapter six. Context-specific-identity-creation

Chapter three placed the concept of individual identity within a cultural and sociohistorical context. Chapters four and five presented a view of identity-structures and identity-processes in a developmental context. Chapter six now focuses specifically on identity-creation processes in adults who are entering a new context, such as a workplace or educational institution (see figure 25).

6.2. The Structure of Chapter Six

6.3. Introduction: Identity-creation in Context

6.4. Pre-context-entry Factors

6.5. Entering the New Context: Entry Shock

6.6. 'Learning the Ropes' and Normalisation

6.7. Summary
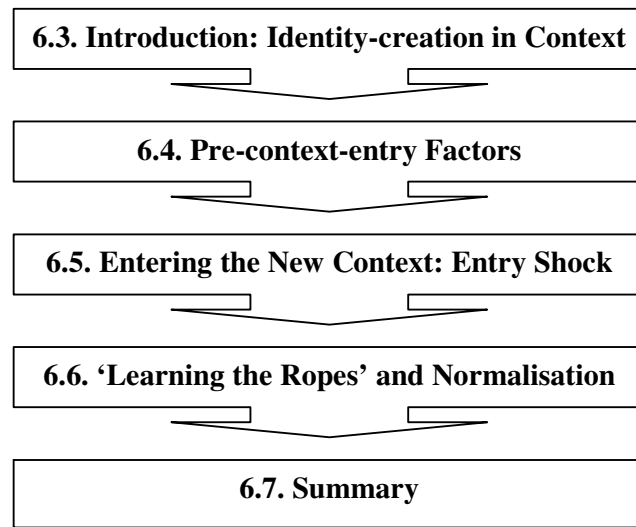
Figure 26. The structure of chapter six

Chapter six will examine existing literature that focuses on how individuals, in adulthood, create a context-specific-identity and the impact this may have on their identity-portfolio (see figure 26). The chapter will review the literature and research relating to entrants who are undergoing a process of socialisation in a specific context, for example a work organisation or an educational institution. There is an interplay between the individual and the context in relation to how the new context-specific-identity is created. The individual's engagement in the identity-creation process during the pre-entry, entry and post-entry periods will be reviewed.

6.3. Introduction: Identity-creation in Context

Before presenting the literature related to the pre-entry, entry and post-entry periods there will first be a general introduction to the area of identity-creation by

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│     6.3. Introduction: Identity-creation in Context     │
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│         6.4. Pre-context-entry Factors              │
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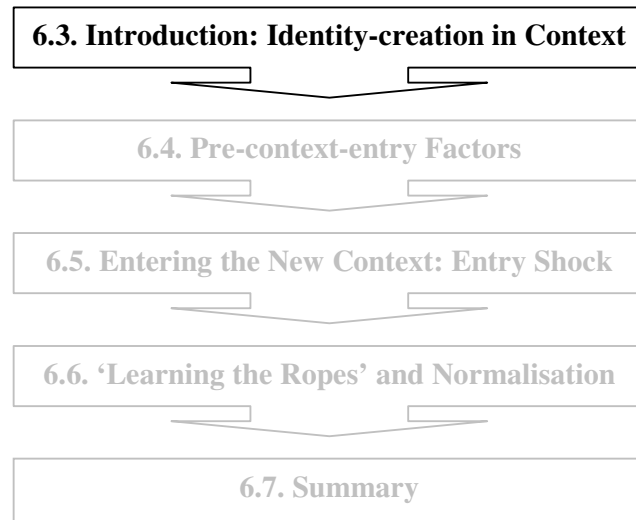
Figure 27. The structure of chapter six: 6.3. Introduction: Identity-creation in context

individuals entering a new context (see figure 27). Through the process of socialising

an individual into a specific context, for example a work organisation, the individual

may acquire the attitudes, behaviour and knowledge needed to participate as a

functioning member of that context (Bauer, Morison and Callister, 1998; Van Maanen

and Schein, 1979). As an individual creates a new context-specific-identity they are

susceptible to influence due to the uncertainty regarding what the new context may

require of them (Ashforth and Saks, 1996). The identity-creation process is complex,

with multiple sources such as prescribed groups, friendship groups, committees,

unions and other individuals attempting to influence the entrant as they create a new

context-specific-identity (Saks and Ashforth, 1997).

<u>6.4 Pre-context-entry Factors</u>

A number of pre-existing factors will now be discussed (see figure 28), which

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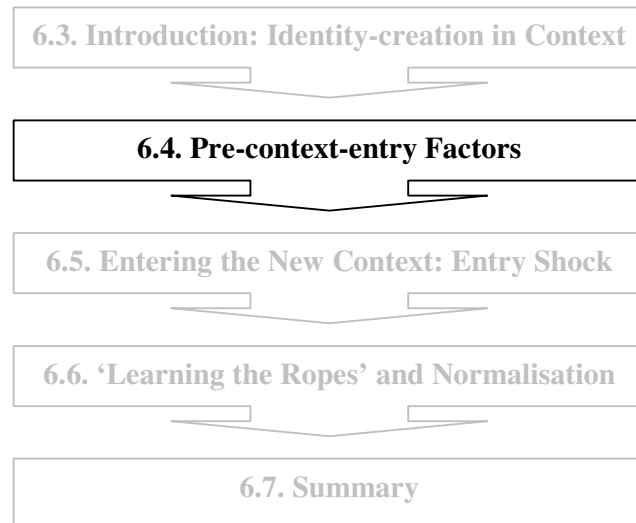
Figure 28. The structure of chapter six: 6.4. Pre-context entry factors

affect the individual's creation of a context-specific-identity. There are wider contextual factors, the structure of the context, the socialisation strategies of the context, whether entering the context involves the leaving behind, to a greater or lesser degree, of another context for the individual and the structure of the individual's pre-existing identity-portfolio.

6.4.1. Broad Contextual Factors

Factors such as the laws, regulations and culture of the society within which the individual and/or the context exists will impact on the socialisation process (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). For example, a cultural norm encouraging women to remain in a homemaker or parental role and which discourages women's participation in paid employment would be likely to make a woman's socialisation into a work context more difficult than where the culture is supportive of women participating in the workforce.

6.4.2. The Context

The socialisation practices utilised in the context will have an impact on how the individual creates their context-specific-identity (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). Wheeler (1966) examined the differing effects of two socialisation tactics: collective versus individual; and serial versus disjunctive (see table 2). Collective socialisation tactics are those where entrants are socialised together so as to produce a standardised 'way of being' in the context, as opposed to individual socialisation tactics, which allow the entrant to form their own set of learning experiences. Serial socialisation tactics involve an experienced context-member who will guide the entrant's socialisation experiences, whereas disjunctive tactics do not involve this guidance from another context-member.

Table 2. Wheeler's (1966) socialisation tactics

Collective versus Individual	Collective socialisation tactics are those that group the new entrants together and have them undergo a common set of learning experiences in order to produce standardised reactions to situations. Individualized socialisation tactics give each entrant their own unique set of learning experiences, allowing a potential variety of responses to situations.
Serial versus Disjunctive	Serial tactics are those where entrants are socialised by an experienced context-member, whereas disjunctive tactics do not involve such a role model and entrants must therefore develop their own definitions of situations in that context

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) added four other socialisation tactics to this list formal versus informal, sequential versus random, fixed versus variable and investiture versus divestiture (see table 3). Formal socialisation tactics keep entrants away from existing context-members during a fixed portion of the socialisation

Table 3. Van Mannen and Schein's (1979) socialisation tactics

Formal versus Informal	Formal tactics keep new entrants away from pre-existing context-members for a defined period of time while they learn their place in the context. Informal tactics place new entrants in a position where they have to 'learn on the job' and are not distinguished from more experienced context-members.
Sequential versus Random	Sequential socialisation tactics are used where entrants are given explicit information about the fixed progression of steps they will have to go through in the new context. Random socialisation tactics are used where there is a dynamic or ambiguous progression.
Fixed versus Variable	Fixed tactics are those that provide entrants with a fixed timeline for the stages they will have to go though in taking their place in the context. Variable tactics are those used where no such information is provided.
Investiture versus Divestiture	Investiture tactics are those where the entrant's pre-existing identity is affirmed through positive social support. Divestiture tactics involve negative social support, with the denial and stripping away of the entrants pre-existing identity in order to (re)construct the entrant's identity along the lines of the context's central values and norms

process, whereas informal socialisation tactics allowed entrants to 'learn on the job' alongside the existing context-members. Sequential socialisation tactics involved providing entrants with information as to the way in which they may progress through the context, for example means of promotion in a work context. Random socialisation tactics involve a dynamic or ambiguous progression. Fixed socialisation tactics provide entrants with a fixed timeline for their progression in the context, for example a student in university knows how many years of study are involved in their academic programme. Variable socialisation tactics do not provide this kind of information. Investiture socialisation tactics involve the affirmation of the entrant's existing identity, whereas divestiture tactics involve the denial and stripping away of the

entrants pre-existing identity in an attempt to (re)construct the entrant's new identity in relation to the context's central values and norms. The framework developed by Jones (1986) groups these six tactics into three broader factors which describe the context in which new entrants receive information about the context, the content of the information given to entrants and the social aspects of the socialisation process (see table 4).

Table 4. Jones's (1986) socialisation framework

Context	Tactics that vary in terms of the contexts in which new entrants receive information about the context and/or their place in the context: collective versus individual tactics; and formal versus informal tactics.
Content	Tactics concerned with the content of the information given to entrants via socialisation: sequential versus random tactics; and fixed versus variable tactics.
Social Aspects	Tactics concerned with the social aspects of the socialisation process: serial versus disjunctive tactics and investiture versus divestiture tactics.

Some researchers have gone further and proposed that socialisation tactics utilised within a particular context can be placed on a single continuum, going from institutionalised, which involves a structured program of socialisation, to individualised, which indicates a relative absence of structure during the socialisation process (see table 5) (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Cable and Parsons, 2001; Jones, 1986). This list of six socialisation tactics and the institutionalised-individualised

Table 5. Institutionalised to individualised socialisation tactics

Institutionalised	A structured program of socialisation that helps to reduce ambiguity and encourages entrants to accept the context's preset norms and thus maintain the status quo.
Individualised	Reflects a relative absence of structure that facilitates ambiguity and encourages entrants to question the status quo and develop their own approach to situations

continuum provides a framework that can be used to analyse or summarise an organisation's socialisation practices, or compare the practices of several different organisations.

Focusing on socialisation processes in a work context, some work organisations focus on developing workforce flexibility and commitment by attempting to instil a compatibility between people and the organisation in which they work, referred to as person-organisation fit in this area of the literature (Cable and Parsons, 2001; De Clercq, Fontaine and Anseel, 2008; Kim, Cable and Kim, 2005; Westerman and Cry, 2004). Organisations will often attempt to implement an established norm for what this compatibility or person-organisation fit is in order that organisational members such as interviewers use their perception of this compatibility when evaluating and hiring job applicants (Cable and Judge, 1997; Rynes and Gerhart, 1990; Westerman and Cry, 2004).

There are trade-offs to be considered when selecting socialisation tactics, and the choice of tactics will very much depend on the type of context and what is needed of the entrants (Ashforth and Saks, 1996). For example, where the aim is to produce context-members who are committed to the context and subscribe to the central values

and norms of that context, certain socialisation tactics can assist entrants by ensuring that they understand the stages and timing of their progression in the context and individuals and by offering the entrants the chance to learn from role models and receive positive support from experienced context-members. This might involve employing sequential, fixed, serial and investiture tactics (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Cable and Parsons, 2001; Kim, Cable and Kim, 2005). Though the use of particular socialisation tactics is associated with particular outcomes these proposed links depend on the entrant's ability to absorb the content of the socialisation process and their perception of that content, rather than simply what the context wishes them to take from the process. Socialisation processes can be used to impart a wide variety of content, such as technical knowledge, role expectations, group norms, political realities or context values (Ashforth and Saks, 1996). For example, a fixed timetable for the assumption of a particular role may facilitate feelings of security in an entrant, enabling them to innovate (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) or it may encourage a desire in the entrant to not take risks and stick to the prescribed progression (Jones, 1986). Through the use of different types of socialisation tactics the context is putting forward particular "discourses of participation" (Musson and Duberley, 2007, pp. 143) to which entrants are exposed. Institutionalised socialisation tactics will be geared toward producing discourses that exploit or influence the identity-work of entrants and other context-members in order that they will create and utilise a context-specific-identity that 'fits' with the context. Individualised socialisation tactics will encourage discourses related to either innovation or individual choice with regard to context-specific-identity-creation.

To increase the success of institutionalized socialisation tactics it is suggested that people with high positive framing should be sought out to join the context, as

those with high negative framing do not respond well to this socialisation process (Kim et al, 2005). Cable and Parsons (2001) found that utilising collective and formal tactics, rather than individual and informal tactics, did not increase the compatibility between the individual and the context. This was hypothesised to be due to individual differences in preference for being socialised collectively or on one's own. However, Ashforth and Saks (1996) found that collective socialisation does encourage entrants to internalise and conform to the norms of the context and that this provokes changes in attitudes, beliefs and even personality. They also suggest that institutionalised socialisation induces entrants to define themselves in terms of their membership of the context, binding their self-perceptions with the perceived identity of the context. This is to say that institutionalised socialisation tactics facilitate identification, by the entrant, with the context. Individualised socialisation can often be seen as a lack of socialisation tactics and may occur more by default than by design (Ashforth and Saks, 1996). Organisations or groups can ease the impact of the socialisation process on the new entrant by enhancing the realism of the entrants' pre-entry expectations, for example through the use of accurate role description (Louis, 1980).

The context influences the socialisation process through the organisation and management of how context-members are grouped together. The size, type and demographic diversity of a group, along with the organisation and management of the context-members roles, for example the design of and degree of physical isolation involved with the role (Saks and Ashforth, 1997), will all impact on how the entrant experiences the socialisation process. These groups, formed by the organisation, can be mechanical, in that the group is prescribed by the organisation on the basis of criteria decided on by those in control of the organisation. The entrant may or may not identify with the group or members of the group (Haslam, 2002).

6.4.3. The Individual

An individual's pre-entry experiences have a powerful affect on their perceptions of and responses to a new context, even long after they have entered the context (Bauer and Green, 1994). The individual will have drawn on their previous experiences in creating and developing their identity-portfolio. An individual's pre-existing identity-portfolio, and how the individual manages their identity-portfolio, will impact on their success in creating a new context-specific-identity, as they are socialised by the context.

Individuals are attracted to certain contexts on the basis that those contexts hold or prescribe similar values and goals to theirs (Lievens, Decaesteker and Coetsier, 2001; Schneider, 1987). In many instances individuals self-select into contexts based on their perception of the degree of compatibility that exists between themselves and the context (Cable and Judge, 1996). However, these perceptions may not be based on accurate perceptions or information.

As part of the pre-emptive identity-work carried out by individuals before entering a new context they will form expectations about the new context. The individual may begin to socialise themselves into what they anticipate will be the form of the new context. If these expectations are not met, perhaps because the expectations were unrealistic, the new entrant will experience dissonance. This may result in the individual deciding to leave this new context (Louis, 1980), which may result in the goals of the individual and the context remaining unfulfilled. New entrant expectations can be unrealistic due to the inflated nature of many organizational recruiting practices (Ward and Athos, 1972, cited in Louis, 1980), or due to the

expectations being based on stereotyped or ill-informed knowledge of the new context.

The entrant's existing attitudes are also a significant predictor of achievement in a new context (House, 1995). In an academic settings, House (1993, cited in House, 1995) found that students who were under-prepared but had confidence in their mathematical ability earned higher grades than under-prepared students with lower levels of confidence academic. Reyes and Stanic (1988, cited in House, 1995) propose that students' attitudes regarding their expectations of success, comparisons of their ability with other students and their confidence in their academic ability were related to mathematical achievement. In a process of socialisation an entrant's predisposition to experience positive or negative states over time and across situations will affect how they interact with the socialisation process in a particular context. Some individuals are predisposed to experience positive or pleasant affective states over time and across situation. High positive affectivity leads an individual to an optimistic view of themselves and the world. Other individuals are predisposed to experience negative or unpleasant affective states. High negative affectivity leads an individual to a negative view of themselves and the world (George, 1992; Watson and Clark, 1984). In a context where institutionalised socialisation is being utilised it is more likely to lead to compatibility between the entrant and the context when the entrant has framed the entry process positively but not in the cases of those who framed it negatively (Kim et al, 2005). Ashford and Black (1996) reported that entrants' explicit efforts to frame things positively were related to higher self-reported job performance and job satisfaction, in an occupational context. An entrant's (pro)activity level during their first six months in a context is affected by the level of their pre-existing desire for control. Individuals with a high desire for control tend to seek out more

information, socialise and network more with other context-members, negotiate more changes to the context or their role and use a positive frame to interpret their experiences (Ashford and Black, 1996). Where an individual is entering a new context, for example starting a new job in a new organisation, the degree of choice or control the individual has in terms of the context they will enter will affect their ability to enter the context that is most compatible with their sense of themselves. For example having numerous job offers when an individual is seeking a new job will facilitate that individual being able to choose the context that they perceive as being most compatible with their values (Cable and Parsons, 2001). In summary, the manner in which an individual carries out their identity-work can influence how they create a new context-specific-identity.

The more experience an individual has with a particular type of context or perhaps the degree to which they have engaged in identity-exploration, for example with a particular type of work environment, the more self-insight that individual will have regarding their values and the types of context they would desire to be in (Feldman and Arnold, 1978, cited in Cable and Parsons, 2001). This will facilitate the individual being more attuned to what their desired contexts would be, in order that they may make them part of their life. It will also help the individual gain an understanding of the new context, of the appropriate norms and values that need to be adopted and how to fit in (Cable and Parsons, 2001).

6.4.4. Leaving a Context/Discontinuing the use of a Context-specific-identity

The degree of identity-work involved with leaving a context and discontinuing the use of its associated context-specific-identity can be considerable, especially

where the context-specific-identity was highly valued by the individual. Where an individual is not only involved in the process of creating a new context-specific-identity but is also engaged in the identity-work of discontinuing the use of another identity, this can be extremely difficult for the individual. Leaving a context behind in this way has been described as a process of unfreezing (Lewin, 1951, cited in Louis, 1980), moving away (Argyris, 1964, cited in Louis, 1980), letting go (Tannenbaum, 1976, cited in Louis, 1980), leavetaking (Van Gennep, 1960, cited in Ashforth, 2001) and disengagement (Ebaugh, 1988, cited in Ashforth, 2001), as the individual psychologically, and usually physically, leaves behind that context and the related context-specific-identity. However, the individual may take elements of that context-specific-identity with them as identity-resources. For example a professional may leave a particular organisation but may take with their identity as a particular type of worker or professional (Duberley, Mallon and Cohen, 2006).

The exiting of a specific context, and its associated context-specific-identity, can be difficult for an individual as they may have to break away from an existing social network (Ashforth, 2001; Zedeck and Mosier, 1990, cited in Morrell, Loan-Clarke and Wilkinson, 2004). The more salient or subjectively important the identity associated with that context was the more difficult the experience of leaving the context will be for that individual (Ashforth, 2001).

The individual may choose to leave a context due to push factors, for example job dissatisfaction (voluntary) or compulsory retirement (involuntary) or pull factors, for example leaving to go to a more attractive job (voluntary) or leaving a demanding job due to failing health (involuntary) (Ashforth, 2001). In the 2007-2008 global strategic rewards report from Watson Wyatt and WorldatWork found that forty percent of employees surveyed cited stress for the primary reason for resigning from a

job (Ruiz, 2007). In an occupational context different variables, such as employee characteristics, the nature of the current job and the nature of the current organisation, have been found to impact on whether an individual decides to move to a new job in the same organisation, the same job in a different organisation or a different job in a different organisation (Fields, Dingman, Roman and Blum, 2005). A significant relationship has been indicated between person-organisation fit and turnover in organisations (Chatman, 1991; Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001, Cable and DeRue, 2002). However, for the majority of individuals the simple dichotomy of push factors versus pull factors does not explain an individual's decision to exit a context. This decision may be influences by a range of factors related to personal, family and career development (Duberley et al, 2006). For some individuals the decision to leave can be part of a gradual process of disillusionment or involving a build up of doubts about their place in the context and an examination of the alternatives (Ashforth, 2001; Duberley et al, 2006; Harmen, Lee, Mitchell, Felps and Owens, 2007). For other individuals a single, jarring event or shock (Morrell et al, 2004, Morrell, 2005), shock (Harmen et al, 2007), epiphany (Denzin, 1989, cited in Ashforth, 2001), disequilibrating circumstance (Marcia, 2002b) or dissonance-invoking experience (Leonard et al, 1999) triggers the decision to exit a particular context. These moments can be internal or external to the individual, and can be negative moments, such as having a fight with the boss, positive moments, such as winning the lottery, or neutral moments, such as receiving an unanticipated job offer (Harmen et al, 2007). Whether gradual or sudden, the decision to leave is related to the fact that the context-specific-identity in question is no longer providing the individual with a sense of coherence and continuity. For example one's level of pay or promotion opportunities no longer match one's expectations, or a job offer prompts a comparison of possible future-

identity-structures, causing one to become dissatisfied and motivated to leave (Harmen et al, 2007). An individual may even leave a context to protect a salient identity, for example where an individual has a work-identity that includes an organisational-identity and a professional-identity they may leave the organisational context in order to protect their professional-identity (Duberley et al, 2006).

The decision to leave a particular context is influenced by how easy it is to leave that context behind or, where relevant, to find another context to take its place. For example, if an individual is experiencing ongoing dissonance in a job, and there are many other employment opportunities available, it may be easier to change jobs than to attempt to solve the problems being experienced in the current context (Cable and Parsons, 2001).

6.5. Entering the New Context: Entry Shock

6.3. Introduction: Identity-creation in Context

6.4. Pre-context-entry Factors

6.5. Entering the New Context: Entry Shock

6.6. 'Learning the Ropes' and Normalisation

6.7. Summary
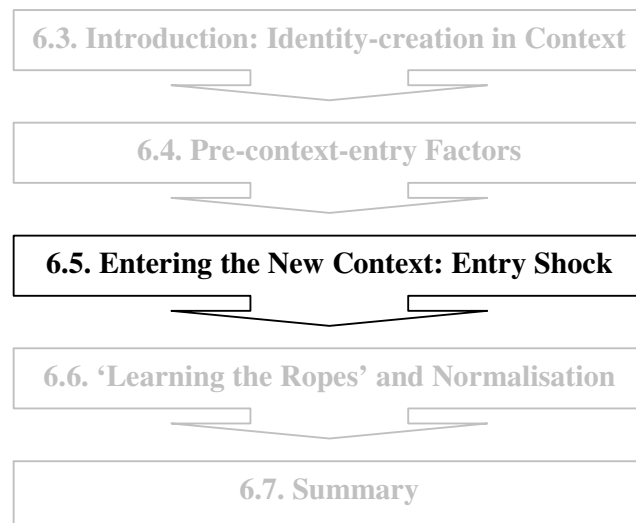
Figure 29. The structure of chapter six: 6.5. Entering the new context: Entry shock

Having discussed the literature relating to the identity-work carried out by individuals in the pre-context entry period this chapter will now present literature relating to the entry process itself (see figure 29). For an individual to enter a new context, to move from being an outsider to a newcomer in terms of that context, is for the individual to enter into the process of adding a new context-specific-identity to their identity-portfolio and to a greater or lesser degree change 'who they are'. Early experiences, as well as pre-entry experiences, have a powerful affect on an entrant's perceptions of, and responses to, a new context. These early perceptions have been found to remain stable for up to a year later (Bauer and Green, 1994).

New entrants often experience disorientation, a sense of foreignness and a kind of sensory overload when entering a new and possibly unfamiliar context (Louis, 1980; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). This experience has been referred to as reality shock (Hughes, 1958, cited in Louis, 1980), entry stress (Wanous, 1992) and surprise (Louis, 1980). Louis (1980) refers to three aspects of new entrants' experience, change, contrast and surprise (see table 6). If the entrant perceives a difference

Table 6. Louis's (1980) three aspects of new entrant experience

Change	The bigger the objective difference between the old context and the new, the more the entrant has to potentially cope with, even if the change is positive.
Contrast	The subjective difference between the old and new contexts, by which new entrants characterise and otherwise define the new context.
Surprise	The difference between an entrant's anticipations, which can be conscious, tacit, or emergent, and subsequent experiences in the new setting. This also encompasses the entrant's affective reactions to this difference. Surprise can be positive or negative; can arise from perceptions of the context, one's role in the context or one's identity. Surprise can come from expectations being under or over-met.

between their own values and their perceptions of the central values of the context this will cause dissonance, as "the norms for success are counter to their personal assumptions" (Cable and Parsons, 2001, pp. 3). Dissonance may cause the entrant to choose the option of leaving the new context, choose to renegotiate the terms of their being in that context, or at least attempt to, or choose to accept the new context, even if it is different to how they thought it would be (Louis, 1980).

6.5.1. The Context's Role in Early Socialisation

The individual engages in identity-work in order to create a new context-specific-identity, often within an established context where others control the environment in which they do this identity-work. The structure of the context, and the socialisation processes used to manage entrants into that context, impacts on the identity-creation process (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Wheeler, 1966). Every entity needs to have a sense of who or what it is, who or what other entities are, and how the entities are associated (Ashforth et al, 2008), and a context can influence how an entrant conceptualises answers to those questions. The context, for example a work organisation or an educational institution, may manage or mismanage the new entrants' early experiences in the context, and also their early interactions with others within the context. This management will have a powerful effect on the entrants' perceptions of the culture within this new context (Ashforth, Sluss and Harrison, 2007). The context must utilise socialisation tactics that will manage and influence the entrant's perceptions of the compatibility between themselves and the context. Subjective perceptions of 'good fit' can create and maintain that compatibility for as long as it is perceived, even if the entrant doesn't have similar characteristics to the context (Kristof, 1996). The perception of fitting-in

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can result in important outcomes in the context (Cable and Parsons, 2001), such as the turnover of context-members. Therefore, in terms of minimising the amount of shock or surprise the new entrants have to deal with, the context can: attempt to ensure that entrants' conscious pre-entry expectations are not under-fulfilled or unmet in early experiences; appreciate the near inevitability of entrants having to deal with unanticipated aspects of this new, different context when organisational or group structures are being designed within the context; and encourage the entrants to learn about the local culture and norms in order to facilitate adaptation to the new context and progress through the stages of socialisation (Louis, 1980). This indicates that the use of secrecy norms, the sink-or-swim, learn-on-your-own philosophy, and sanctions against sharing information among members of a particular context are dysfunctional for newcomers as well as for the context itself (Louis, 1980). The context may also facilitate the entrant's successful socialisation by providing them with training in behavioural self-management techniques, such as self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment and rehearsal, and to also encourage and reinforce these behaviours through the context's norms and role models (Saks and Ashforth, 1997).

The context can influence the identity-creation process and aid in the new entrant's socialisation into the new context through the appraisal process, specifically by providing formal and informal feedback to the entrant in a timely fashion. Feedback given early on can reduce the possibility of entrants making inaccurate attributions or unhelpful evaluations about aspects of the context, those around them or themselves. It increases the entrants' understanding of the context and the processes by which evaluations are made within it (Louis, 1980). If new entrants can be educated as to what occurs during a typical entry experience and how this can be

managed, then they will be more equipped to deal with entry experiences (Louis, 1980).

Prescribed, mechanical groups (Haslam, 2002) will often exist within the context, or will be created for groups of entrants in the socialisation process, for example work groups in an occupational setting. These mechanical groups can become a focal point for the transference, to the entrant, of the context's culture and so the socialisation of the entrant into the group can be critical (Anderson and Thomas, 1996, cited in Saks and Ashforth, 1997). If the socialisation process is managed in a way that facilitates entrants sharing and articulating a particular context-specific-identity then there will be a 'strong' shared or collective identity among those entrants (Cole and Bruch, 2006; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). The more an individual embodies the prescribed identity the more prototypical he or she would be said to be (Ashforth et al, 2008). Certain processes can be utilised so that the prescribed groups match the organic social identifications that the context-members would make themselves (Haslam, 2003). Socialisation tactics can also occur at the group level as entrants may receive social support from other group members and learn about elements of the context from them (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). If an entrant is demographically dissimilar to the other group members this can impede social integration as a salient dissimilarity may induce others in the group to perceive the entrant in terms of the identity implied by the dissimilarity and thus see the entrant as an out-group member (Jackson, Stone and Alverez, 1993, cited in Saks and Ashforth, 1997).

The socialisation process ensures the continued survival of the context, along with its central values and norms, because of the way entrants are provided with a framework for understanding the new context and responding to events and the people

around them (Bauer, Morrison and Callister, 1998; Cote and Levine, 2002). If the socialisation process can cause the entrant to create their new identity such that it becomes aligned with the central values of that context then it is more likely that they will be committed to remaining in that context (Cable and Parsons, 2001).

6.5.2. The Individual's Role in Early Socialisation

Fundamentally, the choice that faces the entrant experiencing dissonance in early socialisation is that they can change the perceptions of the other context-members to match their own (Richter, 1990), change their self-perceptions (or perceptions of the events and people around them) or leave that context (Ashforth, 2001; Cable and Parsons, 2001; Morrell et al, 2004; Morrell, 2005). New entrants may cope more effectively in the new context if they can enhance the realism of their conscious pre-entry expectations (Louis, 1980). In order to do this people must utilise controlled, high effort thinking, rather than the automatic, low effort thinking people utilise the majority of the time (Aronson et al, 2005). If the individual enters the new context and utilises the schemata and heuristics they have inherited from their primary reference group, culture and previous experiences, they will tend to interpret and deal with these new experiences in an automatic way that may result in anticipated outcomes not matching up with what is actually found in the new context (Louis, 1980). This then threatens cognitive consistency and may cause dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

The individual may use sense-making processes to reduce or eliminate any dissonance experienced in early socialisation. The individual will develop causal attributions for why their anticipated outcomes did not occur, and also provide

explanations for the events that did. Thus the individual can reinterpret the experience in order to reduce the state of tension produced by the cognitive inconsistency (Louis, 1980). In this way meaning is assigned to the inconsistency and the revised explanation for its occurrence can be utilised to alter the entrant's schemata (Louis, 1980) in order that the individual can function effectively and efficiently within that context (McLean et al, 2007).

If an entrant engages in self-management or self regulation while engaging in identity-work during their early socialisation, they will experience less anxiety and stress than those who do not (Lindner & Harris, 1993; Saks and Ashforth, 1996; Winne, 1995; Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman, 2002). Self-management/self-regulation techniques include self-observation, self-goal-settings, self-reward, rehearsal and self-punishment. Self-punishment, however, may increase anxiety and stress in that it may reflect a maladaptive self-critical stance that has negative implications for motivation, satisfaction and performance (Saks and Ashforth, 1996). Other techniques include focusing on self-efficacy and self-goals, strategy use, time management, self-judgment, self-reaction, environmental structuring; and help seeking (Zimmerman, 1994; 1998; 2002). Individuals with more sophisticated beliefs about the nature of knowledge and learning, and who believe in their own ability to learn, are more likely to utilise productive strategies (Paulsen and Feldman, 2007). These beliefs and strategies may be learned from others within the new context (Schunk and Zimmerman, 1997).

The sense of compatibility between the individual and the context may be increased if relationships are built with more senior context-members, for example with supervisors in a workplace context. This behaviour can even replace the effects of the context's socialisation process, in terms of producing a sense of compatibility

between the individual and the context (Kim et al, 2005). Entrants who build relationships in this way have also reported receiving higher performance ratings from those, more senior, context-members (Ashford and Black, 1996). General socialising can also aid entrants in their building of positive social networks, which in turn aids those entrants in feeling that they are part of the new context (Bauer and Green, 1998). The entrant is more likely to internalise the values of the context if they spend more social time with their mentors, if they have a mentor, within this context (Chatman, 1991). Where entrants have context-members to mentor them, these mentors are widely recognized as playing a vital role within organisations (Allen, 2003; McCauley, 2005). Examples of mentoring relationships include action learning, apprenticeship, coaching, group mentoring and peer mentoring (Gibson, 2005). The benefits of these types of relationships, whether formal or informal, arise from the fact that the sense an entrant makes of the new context on their own may be inadequate as they have yet to learn the ropes and acquire the knowledge regarding the norms or personal and cultural histories of the context. Therefore it is an advantage for a new entrant to have access to, and build a relationship with, an insider who already knows the norms and histories of the context. It is also of benefit for the context, where the mentor is guiding the entrant towards becoming a centrally participating context-member who has taken on the goals and values of the context. This kind of relationship can help the new entrant interpret their experiences in the new context, and possibly avert shocks or surprises, although the information the insider provides may also cause shocks or surprises. It can provide the entrant with a context-specific framework for interpretation that could help to deal with shocks or surprises in an appropriate way, according to the norms of the context (Hezlett and Gibson, 2005; Kram, 1985; Louis, 1980).

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Entrants are in a position where they may have to learn about their specific tasks within the new context, their role or roles within the new context, learn about their place within their group, how their group functions and learn about the context itself, its values, norms, politics, language and history (Chao, O' Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein and Gardner, 1994; Ostroff and Kozlowksi, 1992). Entrants may use several different information-seeking tactics, for example utilising overt questioning, indirect questioning, third parties, testing limits, disguising conversations, observing and surveillance (Miller and Jablin, 1991). The ability to seek out and acquire information about the differing aspects of the new context has been linked to reduced role ambiguity and role conflict (Miller and Jablin, 1991), higher satisfaction with the context, higher commitment to the context, lower stress, lower turnover intentions (Ostroff and Kozlowksi, 1992) and has been positively linked with task mastery, role clarity and social integration (Morrison, 1993). However, seeking out more information and/or feedback may not necessarily facilitate a sense of compatibility between the individual and the context, as what they find may show how they fit into the new context or it may show the entrant how they do not fit in (Kim et al, 2005).

During the socialisation process the individual may create a psychologically meaningful group in the new context. This group may consist of those other context-members with whom the individual perceives they share an important aspect of self-definition, a sense of 'we-ness'. This categorisation process can occur along certain identity-contours that have no obvious or routinely accessed demographic basis, due to the vast number of possible social self-categorizations available to the individual (Haslam, 2002). The more that the sense of 'we-ness', in term of identity perceptions, is widely shared and densely articulated by the members of this group, the 'stronger' the identity associated with this group will be (Cole and Bruch, 2006; Kreiner and

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Ashforth, 2004). The more a member of the group embodies the shared idea of what it means to be a member of that group the more prototypical he or she would be said to be (Ashforth et al, 2008). Any groups that are formed out of this process, formally or informally, will be organic groups, as opposed to prescribed, mechanical groups. The degree to which a prescribed group matches up to the individual's psychologically meaningful group will depend on the context's organisational structure, socialisation tactics, and how groups are formed within the context (Haslam, 2002).

If the individual cannot or does not implement a coping strategy to deal with entry shock or surprise, the cognitive inconsistency or dissonance will not be reduced or eliminated, resulting in continued psychological discomfort or confusion on the part of the individual. This may cause them to leave this context as a way of eliminating this state of tension. If the individual stays in the context it is likely that inappropriate and dysfunctional interpretations of other people and events within the context may occur (Louis, 1980). It is only if the individual does manage to deal with entry shock in an effective way that they can go on to 'learn the ropes' of the context and become a successful, functional member of that context.

6.6. **'Learning the Ropes' and Normalisation**

Entrants who are able to progress beyond initial difficulties, without deciding to leave that context, may then learn the ropes and develop a more stable context-specific-identity (see figure 30). They will have attained a clearer sense of themselves in the new context, a sense of their role or roles and what is expected of them as they move beyond the immediate affects of the socialisation process. They may then look to other emergent desires for new challenges, growth, friendships or political alliances (Katz, 1980, cited in Ashforth and Saks, 1996). In this way they will move from being

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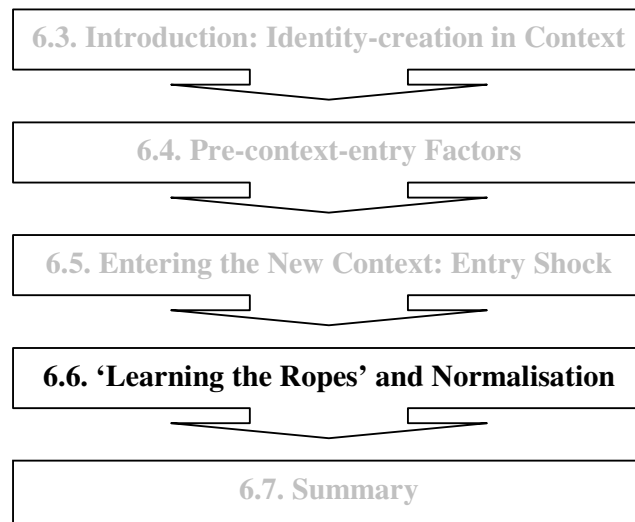
Figure 30. The structure of chapter six: 6.6. 'Learning the ropes' and normalisation

a newcomer to an insider, within that context. Another perspective on this process is that the individual moves along a continuum from being a peripheral participant to being a central participant, as they increase their level of identification with and the amount of influence they have within, that context (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wegner, 1991).

The individual at this point, normalises their participation in that context, in order that they can have a coherent and consistent identity-portfolio. By stabilising their sense of themselves they have rendered "the new, the unexpected, the strange, and the frightening more or less ordinary" (Ashforth et al, 2000; Ashforth, 2001, pp. 18). This process, where the initially strange and shocking is normalised into something that is an ordinary part of daily life, can extend to extreme cases where people learn to make sense of frequent occurrences of violence (Schmid and Jones, 1993, cited in Ashforth, 2001) or normalise the torturing of others (Gibson, 1990; Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros, 1986). The normalisation process is made easier by other context-members providing positive feedback for the individual's new way of

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being, and therefore socially validating their new context-specific-identity. It can also be aided by the use of certain "identity-totems" (Ashforth, 2001, pp. 176). For example, personal possessions from other parts of the individual's life or certain rituals or routines that comfort the individual and stabilise their sense of themselves and their sense of continuity in this new setting can be used (Ashforth, 2001; Kroger and Adair, 2008). However, where the individual wishes to make a clean break from the past they will generally not wish to do so. Normalisation is likely to occur if: the individual is immersed in the context, as it becomes a social cocoon that dominates time, action and psychological processes while the individual is in that context, and possibly outside of that context as well; and if the individual is inclined to become involved and immersed in the local reality and gain acceptance from the other context-members (Ashforth, 2001).

6.7. Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature related to how the creation of a context-specific-identity is influenced by the individual, the group and the context. The creation of the context-specific-identity begins before the individual enters the context, through the individual's pre-emptive identity-work and preconceived ideas about the context, and is also affected by any necessary exiting of other, existing contexts. The most intense period of identity-work will occur when the individual enters the context and contends with the entry shock associated with having to reconcile one's expectations of the context and the reality of the context as one experiences it. Depending on the interaction between the individual and the context, the individual's newly created context-specific-identity will develop towards normalisation as the individual becomes a centrally involved insider within the

context, or the individual will experience ongoing dissonance in the context, resulting in dysfunctional membership of the context or the individual's exit from the context.

While this chapter has focused on the identity-work involved in a once off, macro identity-creation process as an individual adds a new context-specific-identity to their identity-portfolio, an individual must also manage their identity-portfolio on a day-to-day basis. It is the identity-work involved in this day-to-day identity-management upon which the next chapter has its focus.

7. Identity-management

7.1. The Position of Chapter Seven within Section A
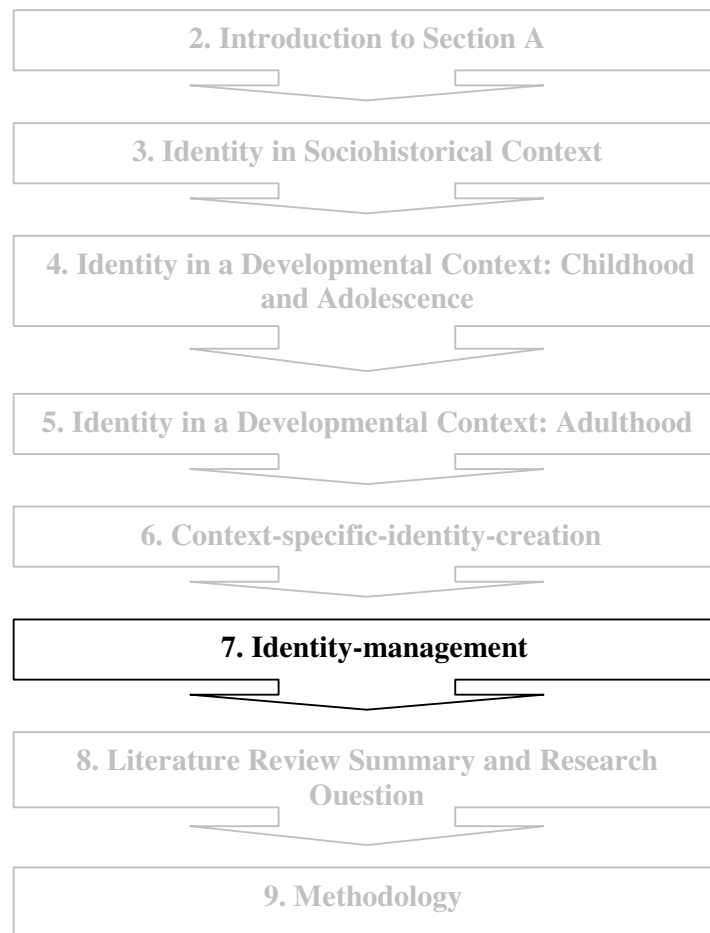
Figure 31. The structure of section A: Chapter seven. Identity-management

Within section A chapter seven discusses literature related to how individuals manage their identity-portfolio on a day-to-day basis, for example how individuals manage their daily, or at least regular, identity-changes between different context-specific-identities. Chapter seven is the last literature review chapter. Chapter eight provides a summary of the literature review and the research question and chapter nine describes the methodology of the current research study.

7.2. The Structure of Chapter Seven

7.3. Identity-change within and between the different Context-specific-identities in one's Life

7.4. The Interaction between the Physical and Psychological Components of Identity-change

7.5. Cueing an Identity

7.6. The Influence of Others: Border-keepers

7.7. Proactive and Reactive Identity-management

7.8. Identity-change and Gender

7.9. Identity-change between the General-identity and a Context-specific-identity

7.10. Summary

Figure 32. The structure of chapter seven

Chapter seven (see figure 32) focuses on literature relating the identity-work carried out by an individual as they live their day-to-day life, engaging in identity-management processes as they utilise different context-specific-identities. As an individual moves from utilising one identity to another they engage in identity-changes. These identity changes are made in response to both internal and external cues and are commonly facilitated by the physical and temporal elements of the contexts that exist within the individual's life.

The literature relating to the different contextual levels at which identity-changes can be made will be reviewed, along with an examination of the literature that discusses how individuals manage their lives on a daily or at least regular basis, namely boundary theory (Ashforth et al, 2000) and work/family border theory (Campbell-Clark, 2000). The chapter will review the differences between integrating and segmenting the parts of ones life (Nippert-Eng, 1996) and their associated context-specific-identities. There will also be an examination of how an identity can be cued by internal or external cues, how an identity-change can be facilitated by certain rituals or rites, the influence of others on day-to-day identity-changes and the proactive and reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies an individual can use in their day-to-day identity-management.

7.3. Identity-change within and between the different Context-specific-identities in one's Life

This chapter will begin its discussion of day-to-day identity-management with a presentation of the literature related to the identity-changes individuals make within and between the different context-specific-identities in their life (see figure 33). The distinction between an identity-change occurring within a particular context-specific-identity, and between different context-specific-identities is that there are different contextual levels at which an individual may perceive themselves. An individual's self-perceptions, at a particular contextual level, can be seen as being made up of different contexts (physical, temporal and/or psychological) (Campbell-Clark, 2000) that they change between on a regular basis, for example family, work, sports etc. These self-perceptions may also be seen as being made up of different roles, bounded

in both space and time, that exist in his/her life that they are involved in on a regular

basis, for example father, maths teacher and

Figure 33. The structure of chapter seven: 7.3. Identity-change within and between the different context-specific-identities in one's life

tennis-player (Ashforth, 2000). The individual's self-perceptions, at a particular

contextual level, may also be seen as being made up of identities that encompass these

domains and roles, which the individual changes between on a regular basis. Within

these perceived contexts there may be further levels of self-perception, for example

within an individual's perception of themselves as a teacher they may perceive

themselves more specifically as a business studies teacher and within that still as a

specialist teacher of financial accounting (see figure 34). These identities become more specific as the associated reference groups become more specific (Ashforth et al, 2000; Leonard et al, 1999). Ashforth et al (2000) refer to these as subroles.
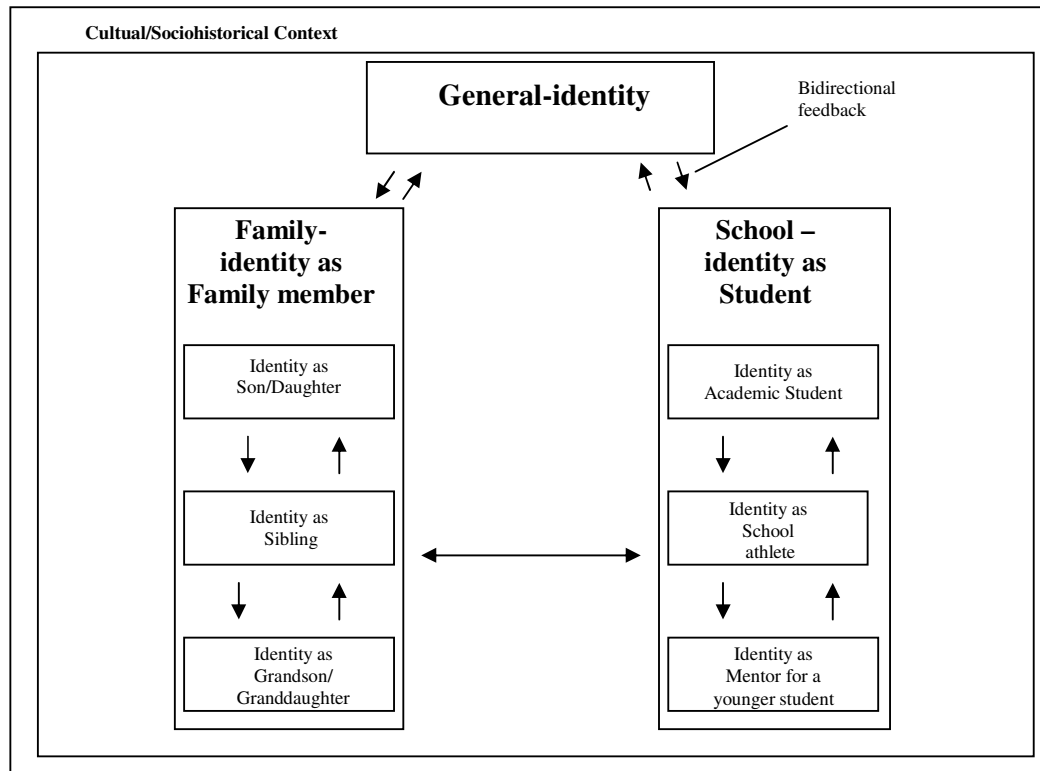
Figure 34. The identity-portfolio including identity-structure within contexts

As an individual 'shuffles' through their identity-portfolio they change the context-specific-identity they are utilising, in response to an internal or external cue. The individual attempts to adapt to the context in which they perceive themselves as being, and it is the contrast between these identities, or more specifically the difference in the core and peripheral features of the identities, with the core features more heavily weighted (Louis, 1980), that cause the individual to engage in identity-work in order to maintain their sense of coherence and distinctiveness (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). The greater the contrast between the two identities the greater

the difficulty in making an identity-change, "switching cognitive gears" (Louis and Sutton, 1991, pp. 55, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000) or making a "psychological region shift" (Richter, 1990, pp. 149) as the individual psychologically disengages from one identity and (re)engages with another identity that is dissimilar to the first (Ashforth et al, 2000).

In the next section this concept of changing between different perceived contexts is further examined through a review of the literature that describes identity-change as a process of border/boundary-crossing as the individual leaves one context by 'travelling' across the border of that context and enters another.

7.3.1. Border/Boundary Theory

There are a number of different areas of study that focus on the individual's 'movements' between the different parts of their lives on a daily or at least regular basis. Much of the literature in this area utilises metaphors of physicality and movement, such as borders/boundaries and border/boundary-crossing.

Borders/boundaries are "mental fences" (Zerubavel, 1991, pp. 7) around geographical places, categories of people, ideas etc. that people create and maintain in order to simplify and order their environment (Ashforth et al, 2000). The approaches that will be principally discussed here are Campbell-Clark's (2000) work-family border theory, the boundary theory of Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate (2000), and Nippert-Eng's (1996) concept of boundary-work. These theories highlight how individuals go about their daily lives, how they move or transition between different perceived contexts within their lives and that these different contexts often require the individual to be a certain type of person or utilise a different context-specific-identity.

These theories posit that as an individual moves or transitions from one context to another they cross a border/boundary, which is a perceived, psychological "line of demarcation" (Campbell-Clark, 2000, pp. 756). Campbell-Clark (2000) highlights that borders can also be physical and temporal in nature. These borders/boundaries become 'real' as individuals perceive them as such and behave as if they are real (Weick, 1979, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000). As these border/boundary concepts are shared socially and groups or societies adopt them, new members of the group or society are socialised to perceive and act towards these border/boundary concepts as real, external phenomena. Therefore in examining an individual going about their daily life and encountering certain border/boundary concepts one would have to take into account both the psychological border/boundary-crossing and the sociophysical border/boundary concepts built up and utilised by the social systems to demarcate their perceived territory, for example work organisations, sports clubs or religious groups (Richter, 1990). Ashforth et al (2000) list other metaphors, from the literature, for border/boundary-crossing: crossing an abyss (Durkheim, 1965, cited in Ashforth et al 2000); unfreezing-movement-freezing (Lewin, 1951, cited in Ashforth et al 2000); crossing a bridge (Simmel, 1955, cited in Ashforth et al 2000); and as taking a cognitive leap between categories (Zerubavel, 1991).

7.3.1.1. Difficulties in using the Metaphors of Borders/boundaries

The use of border/boundary concepts has emerged from the use of symbolic resources to create distinctions between different categories, for example 'us' and 'them' or acceptable and unacceptable, and thereby "create, perpetuate or challenge institutionalised differences or inequalities" (Heracleous, 2004, pp. 95; Lamont and Molnar, 2002). However, the border/boundary concept is often treated as being

socially and organisationally unproblematic, rather than have it be recognised that these 'borders/boundaries' are complex, shifting, inter-subjective, negotiated, socially constructed entities (Heracleous, 2004). It may be that the use of words such as border and boundary invite this oversimplification, as the use of such physical metaphors clashes with their description as complex, fluid and negotiated (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Paulsen and Hernes, 2003). The use of the words border or boundary leads to the temptation to think of or describe these borders/boundaries as 'real', 'out there' and discoverable, even for those authors who highlight their socially constructed and negotiated nature. What come to be seen or described as 'objective' borders/boundaries are social structures that are "produced by, based on, and legitimated by ongoing social processes" (Heracleous, 2004, pp. 99). These social processes are carried out within the context of existing structural arrangements, which are in turn the product of previously carried out negotiations (Fine, 1984, cited in Heracleous, 2004). Nipper-Eng's (1996) detailed description of the border/boundary concept and the concept of border/boundary work utilises many similar descriptions to that which has been described, in this thesis, as identity-creation, identity-development, identity-management, and identity-work. Therefore it becomes apparent that it is possible to describe that which the border/boundary literature examines through describing certain identity-processes, and specifically without the use of metaphors that aid in the reification of identity-processes and social structures as stable and 'real'.

7.3.2. The Focus on Work and Family in the Literature

Two contexts that are commonly present in peoples' lives are the work context and the family context. Campbell-Clark's (2000) work-family border theory is

focused on the work and family contexts, and boundary theories such as that of Ashforth et al (2000) focuses on "home, work and other places" (pp. 472). Family and work represent two very important social spheres, where individuals commonly adopt and develop context-specific-identities. The adoption of these identities can have negative or positive affects on the individual's life (Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001). This tendency in the literature, to perceive and then study the work and family contexts as separate but interrelated entities, is a product of the current sociohistorical context. The structure of the family has changed through history, often in response to market demands. When the home, inhabited by a large family, was the basis of the production system everyone in the large family was viewed as productive. With the industrial revolution production moved to the factory and women stayed at home as caregivers, in a smaller, nuclear family, where their role became de-valued (Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001; Campbell-Clarke, 2000). The current economic climate, with increasing numbers of women at work reducing the family's status as a source of support, makes the single, unattached worker the most desirable. This is what frames the current view of family/work context issues (Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001).

7.3.3. The Integration-segmentation Continuum

Both work-family border theory and boundary theory utilise Nippert-Eng's (1996) concept of the integration-segmentation continuum. If an individual psychologically (and perhaps physically and/or temporally) segregates, or keeps apart from one another, the parts of their life, and their corresponding context-specific-identities, there will be a distinct and easily recognisable contrast between them. It will be easy for the individual to know what context-specific-identity to utilise in

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which context, without any confusion. However, when it comes to changing between these two contexts, changing from the utilisation of one context-specific-identity to another, this will involve substantial identity-work, or in the language of the border/boundary literature, "boundary work" (Nippert-Eng, pp. 7), as one is making a distinct change in who one is and certain strategies must be employed in order to maintain one's sense of coherence and continuity. Two identities may then evolve independently over time and diverge in their content (Shamir, 1992, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000). Ashforth et al (2000) refer to segregation of roles as involving low role blurring and a high magnitude of change between roles (with large changes in many core and peripheral features between the two). If an individual psychologically (and perhaps physically and/or temporally) integrates the parts of their life then this change from one way of being to another will not require as much effort or identity-work, as there is no clear "line of demarcation" (Campbell-Clark, 2000, pp. 756) in this case. However, the disadvantage, in this case, is that there is now a greater risk of dissonance or conflict caused by a blurring or ambiguity between the different context-specific-identities. This ambiguity may result in the individual becoming confused or not knowing which context-specific-identity should be utilised, or perhaps utilising an inappropriate or unhelpful context-specific-identity, in a specific instance. An integration of roles has also been described as involving high role blurring and a low magnitude of change between roles, with only a few small changes in core and peripheral features between the two (Ashforth et al, 2000). Either of these strategies can be used by an individual to minimise dissonance or conflict and maintain their sense of compatibility between the contexts in their life. The choice of strategy in a particular instance, and whether it can be used successfully, is influenced by numerous factors. The choice is influenced by broad, socially contextual factors,

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for example does the prevailing culture allow individuals to utilise the strategy that the individual wishes to use. It is influenced by the individual's preference for integration or segregation, internalised from the primary reference group and/or built up over time through the individual's experiences. It is also influenced by how similar the individual perceives the contexts to be to each other and finally by their own characteristics, for example, their time management skills (Ashfoth et al, 2000; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Desrochers and Sargent, 2003; Nippert-Eng, 1996). The use of integration or segregation strategies can be seen as a mix of the individual's personal preferences and the individual's reaction to external influences.

7.3.4. Permeability and Flexibility of Borders/boundaries

Two important aspects of the border/boundary crossing concept are the concepts of border/boundary permeability and flexibility. The permeability of a border/boundary is described as the degree to which elements of other contexts may enter into the context in question (Ashforth et al, 2000; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Hall and Ritchter, 1988). This is primarily psychological (for example an impermeable border/boundary does not facilitate one attending to or perhaps even thinking about other contexts) but can be physical (for example having an office at home). Context-specific-behaviours from other contexts in the individual's life, and concerns about other contexts in the individual's life, are the most likely context-specific-elements to permeate through a permeable border/boundary. It is also possible for the border/boundary between two contexts to be permeable in one direction but not the other (Richter, 1990). For example an individual may find that a friend accepts them talking about work issues but that it is unacceptable to their work colleagues to discuss issues to do with their friends. This situation may occur due to one context

being more powerful than the other, or more socially rewarding, as cultures value certain social roles above others. This leads to more conflict than where there is greater equality in the value attributed to social roles (Marks, 1977; 1994). The flexibility of a border/boundary describes the degree of psychological, and also spatial and temporal, pliability of that border/boundary (Ashforth et al, 2000; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Hall and Ritchter, 1988). For example, if an individual's terms of employment state that they may do their work at a time and location of their choosing, that would be a flexible border/boundary. Where two of the contexts in an individual's life can be viewed as having flexible and permeable borders/boundaries they have been referred to as being blended (Campbell-Clark, 2000) or integrated (Ashforth et al., 2000). This causes the contexts to become less distinguishable from each other and increases the probability that the individual will not perceive that they should change from utilising one context-specific-identity to another in instances where that is appropriate. This could lead to conflict, such as receiving negative feedback from other context-members. Integration will often involve the awkward juggling of conflicting demands (Campbell-Clark, 2000).

7.4. The Interaction between the Physical and Psychological Components of Identity-change

Richter (1990) highlights different ways in which the physical and psychological aspects of identity-change, or the psychological region shift as she refers to it, interact (see figure 35). The methods of moving between different contexts, for example work and home (the two contexts examined in Richter [1990])

are referred to as transition styles, and each of the three styles presented: anticipatory; discrete; and continuous, represents a sequence of psychological and physical shifts.
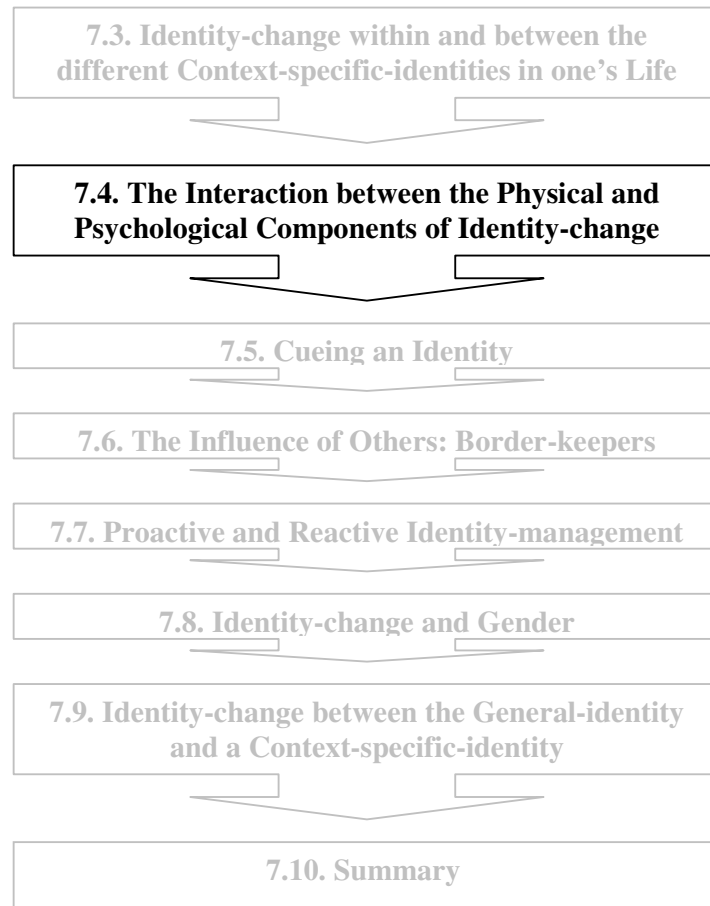
Figure 35. The structure of chapter seven: 7.4. The interaction between the physical and psychological components of identity-change

The anticipatory transition style involves the psychological transition preceding the physical transition. The individual is concerned with the context they are going to become involved with before they leave the context in with they are currently situated, for example dressing in a martial arts uniform and practicing martial art movements at home before leaving to travel to a martial arts competition with one's club. The discrete transition style involves the psychological transition beginning with

the commencement of the physical transition and ending at the end of the physical transition. The two transitions occur simultaneously and this style would typify someone who is psychologically and physically active at a high level in each of the contexts and therefore cannot bring any vestiges of who they are in one context into the other. The continuous transition style involves the psychological transition beginning with the physical transition and ending some time after the physical transition has ended. In this case the individual requires some "transitional warm-up time" (Richter, 1990, pp. 145) to leave behind the previous context-specific-identity and fully engage in the utilisation of one that is appropriate for the current context, after physically arriving in that context. Therefore, in an examination of any identity-change between contexts the interplay between the physical and psychological elements of that change must be examined, as they may not overlap exactly.

7.5 Cueing an Identity

This chapter has presented literature related to the ways in which individuals engage in regular identity-changes and to the ways in which the psychological and physical components of identity-change interact. There will now be a presentation of literature related to the ways in which a particular part of an individual's identity-portfolio may be cued by internal and/or external factors (see figure 36).

7.5.1 Cueing an Identity: Stimulus Management

Identity-change processes are affected by the way in which objects, people and activities exist and are perceived physically/spatially and temporally, within the contexts that exist in the individual's life (Davies 2007; Elsbach, 2004; Kroger and
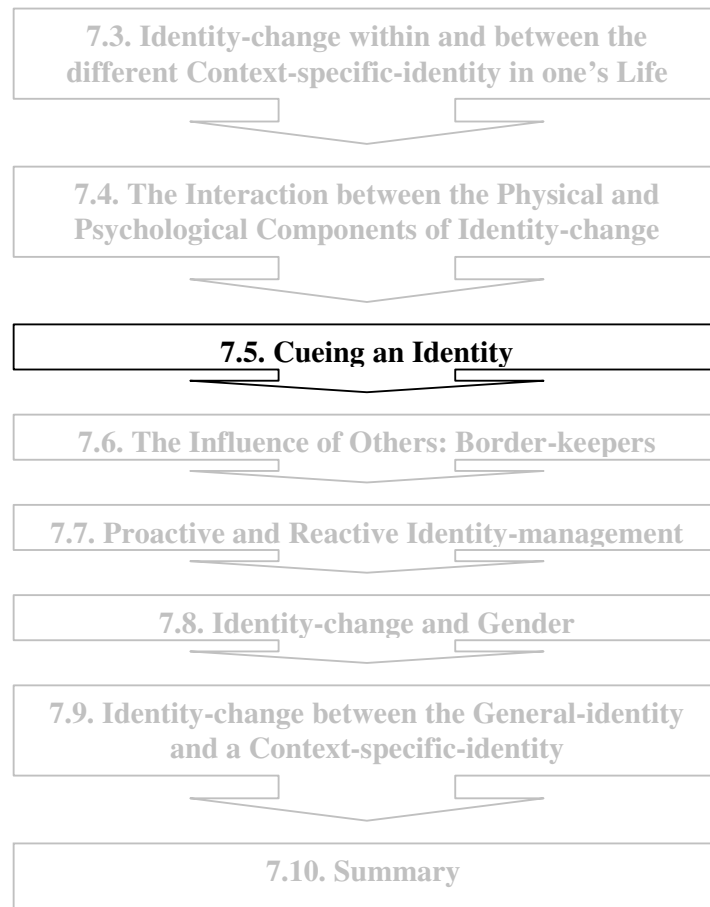
Figure 36. The structure of chapter seven: 7.5. Cueing an identity

Adair, 2008; Nipper-Eng, 1996; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004). Kroger and Adair, (2008) highlight the way in which valued personal objects reflect important identity elements and can provide individuals with a sense of identity continuity. The extent to which the individual has power over these objects, people and activities will reflect the individual's identity-management preferences in terms of integrating or segmenting the different parts of their lives. It is in this vein that Cote (1996) refers to such "personal deportments" (pp. 426) as tangible identity-capital assets, which can

be used as 'passports' in and out of particular social and institutional spheres. However, the individual also has to contend with the fact that other individuals may have as much, if not more, power to control or direct the physical/spatial and temporal organisation of objects, people and activities in a particular context. Certain established social structures may also have such power, such that the organisation of objects, people and activities are influenced by context-specific norms, rules or regulations. From these points one can see how identity-structures extend beyond the individual's physicality into the objects, people and activities around them. Identities are expressed through an individual's presentation of their own body and their physical, tangible surroundings (Elsbach, 2004; Nippert-Eng, 1996). Other individuals and social structures that have the power to influence or dictate this discourse or expression are then able to take a hand in the development of the corresponding context-specific-identity (Musson and Duberley, 2007). Any context-specific object, person or activity is then capable of acting as a cue for a related context-specific-identity and may therefore threaten the individual's immersion in a currently held identity. For example, the amount of control an individual has over their physical workspace will dictate whether they can personalise their office décor such that it reflects the workplace identity they wish to enact (Elsbach, 2004). Forehand, Deshapande and Reed (2002) discuss how cues or identity-primes can be transmitted through advertising in order to evoke desired identities. Just as identities have core and peripheral features there are objects, people and activities that are more evocative of particular context-specific-identities than others, such that some of the things that surround us become inseparable from our identity (Nippert-Eng, 1996).

The contents of a specific context not only cue the related context-specific-identity but can also link that context to, or insulate it from, other contexts. Whether two

contexts are linked together or insulated from one another depends on the extent of the overlap of their contents. This has an impact on whether integration or segmentation is facilitated as the more effective identity-management strategy in a particular instance. If two contexts have very similar contents, or physical identity markers (Elsbach, 2004) this encourages an "all-purpose 'framework of experience'" and integration, as trying to keep them separate would be very difficult and require a lot of identity-work. If two contexts have very little in common then two separate identities are encouraged as trying to integrate these two, different contexts would require a lot of identity-work (Nippert-Eng, 1996, pp. 36). The decisions an individual makes with regard to "what times and places are appropriate for specific activities, people and objects are based on cultural and personal assumptions about the meaning of certain times and spaces", for example home is 'private' while work is 'public' and hence certain contents are acceptable in one but not the other (Nippert-Eng, 1996, pp. 38; Zerubavel, 1985, cited in Nippert-Eng 1996). There are many different objects, people and activities that are used to make distinctions between contexts and their related context-specific-identities (see table 7), including how one manages calendars, keys, clothes and personal appearance.

7.5.2 Cueing an Identity: Rites of Passage/Transition Rituals

When a regular identity-change becomes very familiar to the individual they may employ a transition ritual or rite of passage (Richter, 1990, Van Gennep, 1960, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000). This is where a series of regular activities facilitate the individual's identity-change, by creating or encouraging a psychological chain of events that help to move the individual through the steps necessary to make that identity-change. The other context-members in these contexts can play a role in these

rituals, for example a group of housemates could engage in a joint routine where a ritual is built up around waking each other up in the morning, having breakfast together and leaving for work at the same time, or a group of work colleagues may clean up a work area together to mark the end of the work day. These rites/rituals may

Table 7. Nipper-Eng's (1996) methods by which the parts of one's life can be integrated or segmented

Calendars	whether an individual uses one calendar for all the parts of their life or has different calendars for different contexts, what information is allowed on each calendar and how they are displayed, for example publicly or privately
Keys	whether keys are kept on one key ring or several separate key rings;
Clothes	what clothes an individual decides to wear and whether the same clothes are worn across different contexts or are there context-specific costumes/uniforms used to evoke particular identities
Personal appearance	decisions made by an individual regarding shaving, applying make-up, applying nail-polish, styling hair, teeth-cleaning, application of purchased smell, piercing and/or tattooing and how these are presented or not across the different contexts in that individual's life
Wallets or purses	what is placed in this identity kit (wallets and purses are referred to as identity kits by Nippert-Eng [1996]) with regard to whether its contents, often made up of personally meaningful artefacts, come from one context or several contexts.
Language	do any of the contexts in an individual's life require or encourage specific ways of talking, for example profanity or business-related jargon
Representations of other people	how people are listed in address books etc. and whether photos of, or gifts from, people from one context displayed in another
Food and drink	relates to whether the individual consumes different types of food and drink in different contexts
Money	relates to whether the money used in a particular context is specific to that context or not, for example would an individual use their own money to pay for a work expense and then claim the money back, or insist that the work context directly provide the money for the expense (and the meaning given to money in a particular context, for example in a casino versus in a bank [Argyle and Furnham, 1998])

involve more or less formulaic behaviour, and the manipulation of emotionally charged symbols such as particular settings, props or clothing (Davies 2007; Elsbach,

2004; Kroger and Adair, 2008; Nipper-Eng, 1996; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004). In this way the rites/rituals signal, both to the individual and to the other context-members, that an identity-change is taking place. Rites of passage or transition rituals can be most effectively utilised to facilitate a significant identity-change between two very different or segmented contexts (Ashforth et al, 2000).

Van Gennep's (1960, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000) rites of passage described rites of separation, which facilitate the individual leaving a context and disengaging with a context-specific-identity, rites of transition, which facilitate identity-change and possibly physical movement, and rites of incorporation, which facilitate the engaging with the next context-specific-identity. All of these rites can be triggered by internal cues, for example 'push' factors such as hunger, thirst, exhaustion, mood, emotion or a sense of closure, 'pull' factors such as the anticipation of engaging with the identity one is going to change to and of how this change will satisfy the 'push' factors (Ashforth et al, 2000). Rites of passage can also be cued by external cues, for example calendars or clocks (Nippert-Eng, 1996), interruptions, social signals or requests and the completion of a project or task (Ashforth et al, 2000).

Over time an individual's scripts/event schemata associated with their regular identity-changes, possibly involving rites/rituals cued by internal and external cues, will organise those changes in a temporal flow that will facilitate the individual's perception that there is a degree of predictability and control in their lives (Ashforth et al, 2000; Lord and Foti 1986, cited in Ashforth 2001). When an identity-change is repeated multiple times, and on a regular basis, both the identity-change itself and the ways in which it is cued will become relatively automatic or 'mindless' (Ashforth and Fried, 1988), and the identity-work involved will become relatively unconscious and perceptually invisible to the individual (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). The

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advantage of this 'mindlessness' is that the individual can change easily and effortlessly from one identity to another while conserving cognitive capacity. The disadvantage of this 'mindlessness' is that the likelihood of the individual making an unintentional identity-change, caused by an internal or external cue, for example a person, object, phrase from or thought about a specific context, increases as the individual is not consciously managing their identity-work (Ashforth et al, 2000).

7.6. The Influence of Others: Border-keepers

This chapter will now present literature which focuses on the influence of other context-members on how individuals engage in identity-management processes (see figure 37). Context-members, especially those with whom the individual has significant relationships (Drigotas et al, 1999) (for example family members, close friends or mentors) will have varying amounts of control over the management of that individual's identity-changes. Often it will be up to the other context-members to decide what level of involvement they wish to have (Richter, 1990). Individuals engage in an identity-change by turning their thinking towards a particular context (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Campbell-Clark (2000) describes these individuals as border-keepers. It is likely that many of the contexts the individual finds him/herself in on a daily/regular basis already existed when the individual first encountered them. These contexts have pre-existing, prescribed sociophysical borders/boundaries, created and

| 7.3. Identity-change within and between the different Context-specific-identities in one's Life |
| 7.4. The Interaction between the Physical and Psychological Components of Identity-change |
| 7.5. Cueing an Identity |
| **7.6. The Influence of Others: Border-keepers** |
| 7.7. Proactive and Reactive Identity-management |
| 7.8. Identity-change and Gender |
| 7.9. Identity-change between the General-identity and a Context-specific-identity |
| 7.10. Summary |

Figure 37. The structure of chapter seven: 7.6. The influence of others: border-keepers

negotiated by current and previous context-members, which regulate the structural and attitudinal elements of the context (Richter, 1990). The individual has to deal with these prescribed border/boundary concepts even if they run contrary to their own preferences, for example, an individual may have a preference for integrating the parts of their life, but their work context does not allow any vestige of other contexts in the workplace and does not allow any flexibility in terms of work hours or location.

7.7. Proactive and Reactive Identity-management Strategies
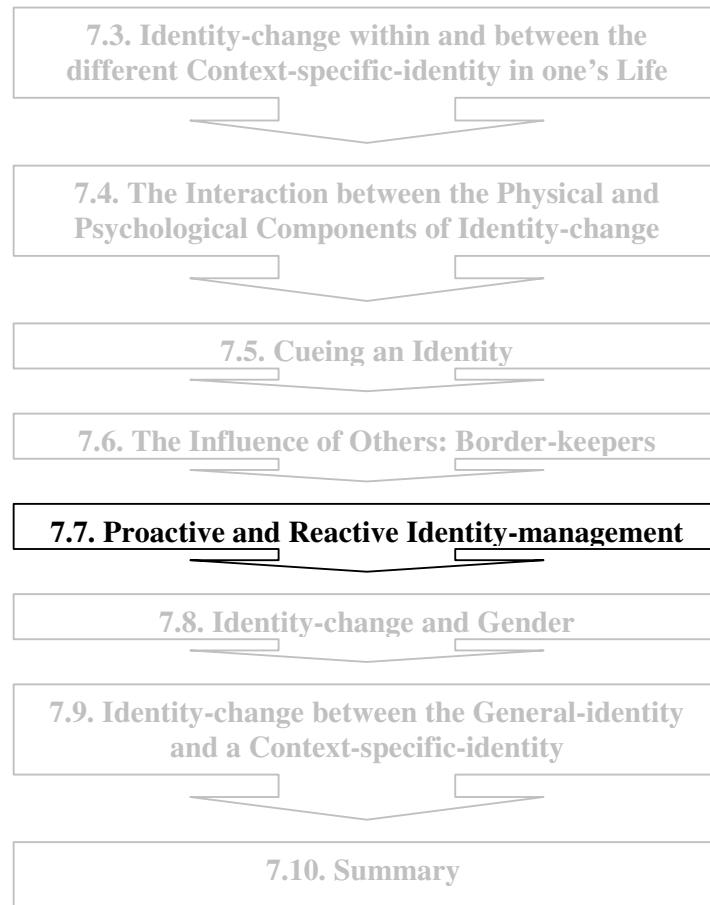
Figure 38. The structure of chapter seven: 7.7. Proactive and reactive identity-management

Literature relating to the multiple ways in which an individual can proactively manage or arrange their life in order that they can minimise the amount of conflict or cognitive dissonance they experience in their day-to-day life will be presented in this subsection (see figure 38).

Strategies for coping with identity-change can be based on changing others' expectations through redefinition of role demands or by changing one's own

expectations and attitudes through a process of reorientation (Richter, 1990). Whether or not an individual has the power or control necessary to be able to change the expectations of others is a factor affecting whether proactive or reactive strategies will be chosen. If the individual is a central participant (has internalised the context's culture etc., is competent, has connections with other central participants and identifies with the context and the associated responsibilities of membership) within one or both of the contexts involved in a specific identity-change they may have the influence necessary to negotiate and make changes to elements of the context(s) that affect the ease with which an identity-change may occur. Central participation also involves strong identification with the context and the associated responsibilities of membership, which results in their identity being closely tied to their membership of that context. This will motivate the individual to expend more energy in their management of that context in order to facilitate relative ease in their identity-changes (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wegner, 1991).

Proactive strategies have also been described as deliberate processes, which describe how individuals choose behaviours because of who they think they are (perceived identity-structure) and who they want to be (possible future identity-structures). Behaviours are chosen in line with their ability to obtain feedback, in order to validate one's identity. The deliberate process is also bound up with their perceived, possible future-identities, in that individuals act in accordance with how they would like to be (Leonard et al, 1999). For example an individual works towards their first year college exams because they want to be a college graduate. Individuals who change organisations frequently, which is rapidly becoming the norm for many people (Bishop, Goldsby and Neck, 2002), find it hard to create a stable sense of themselves as they are frequently forced to create new context-specific-identities, and

hence experience changes in sources of feedback, through interaction and self-reflection (Lindgren and Wahlin, 2001). People behave in accordance with gender stereotypes, certain masculine or feminine ways of being, in accordance with their gender-identity. This can have consequences for people, for instance in contexts such as the construction industry (Gilbert and Walker, 2001) and the police service (Metcalf and Dick, 2002) women have negative experiences when interacting with their colleagues due to their sex, because of gender related stereotypes. The adoption of an identity can change the way an individual deals with the world, for example managers have been found to employ better/more practical coping strategies than non-managers (Frydenberg and Lewis, 2002). This method of identity-management, which allows an individual's set of positive self-attributions to be maintained by interpreting the world through existing identity schemas is referred to by Whitbourne et al (2002) as a process of identity assimilation.

Where an individual's experiences become sufficiently discrepant from their existing identity, they may then begin to make appropriate changes or shifts through what Whitbourne et al (2002) refer to as a process of identity accommodation. Identity-changes may occur, may be cued or become necessary in situations that were not or could not be planned for or dealt with through the use of proactive strategies. Richter (1990) refers to this situation as an "interposed transition" (pp. 146), where one must look to the congruence of the identity an individual is utilising and the social and physical space in which they are located, at a given moment in time. For example, dissonance may occur when an individual is confronted with a problem from one context while involved with another, such as having to deal with the news of a sick child during the working day, or a teenager having to interact with family members while also with a group of friends. However, this situation can also occur due to

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internal factors, such as an individual thinking of a problem from one context while in another. The likelihood of this type of situation occurring will depend on how focused the individual is on the context (Richter, 1990), and the degree of overlap between the contents in the contexts (Nippert-Eng, 1996). This situation requires greater awareness and flexibility than would be involved in proactively establishing a routine and sticking to it (Richter, 1990) if cognitive dissonance or conflict is to be minimised or eliminated. The number of such intrusions, from external or internal sources, into the 'way of being' utilised by an individual at a given point in time, will be influenced by how much control they have in the contexts that exist in their life.

Reactive processes (Leonard et al, 1999) are bound up with the concept of dissonance. When an individual experiences an inconsistency between how they perceive themselves and how, or who, others are proposing they are through feedback, conflict/dissonance occurs. For example, if an individual feels that others are suggesting that they are dishonest, but the individual perceives him/herself as being honest, then there is conflict between the two points of view. This motivates the individual to take action in order to minimise or eliminate this conflict (Leonard et al, 1999; Markus and Kundra, 1986), by adopting an adaptive strategy. The individual may attempt to resolve this disruption by narrating the experience as provoking insight or giving meaning to the situation. Individuals are motivated to utilise particular stories about themselves in order to either change or maintain a particular view or themselves (McLean et al, 2007). The undertaking of these strategies may be conscious or unconscious on the part of the individual and may exist only in the mind of the person or the strategies may manifest themselves through the individual's behaviour (Leonard, et al, 1999). There are many possible adaptive strategies. One may attempt to work harder or change one's ways in order to change future feedback.

One could look for other feedback to contradict or discredit the original, conflict-causing feedback (discounting feedback). One could try to argue one's way out of the situation by proposing that the feedback is incorrect (changing feedback). One could convince others that one didn't really try hard so therefore the feedback isn't meaningful (dissociation). One could attempt to associate with others who are successful in order to make one look successful (association). One could convince others that the trait, competency or value for which the feedback was received is of no value anyway (reaction formation). One could attempt to avoid all future feedback (feedback avoidance). One could try putting others down in an attempt to make oneself look better (reducing status of others). Or one could attempt to show that one did not have control over what the feedback was given for (reducing personal responsibility) (Leonard, et al, 1999). Depending on the situation or context these adaptive strategies may be beneficial in the short term but maladaptive in the long-term.

Through the effective use of proactive or reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies conflict/dissonance can be minimised or eliminated. This allows the individual to go about their day-to-day lives in an efficient manner.

7.8. Identity-change and Gender

Literature will now be reviewed that highlights the way in which an individual's gender affects the way in which they engage in identity-management processes (see. figure 39). Women in Ireland provide the majority of unpaid family care (CSO, 2006; 2007a; 2007b), as well as the majority of paid care giving to children and the elderly (CSO, 2007b). They also continue to provide this majority of family care when they are participating in the labour force (Fredrikson-Goldson et al,
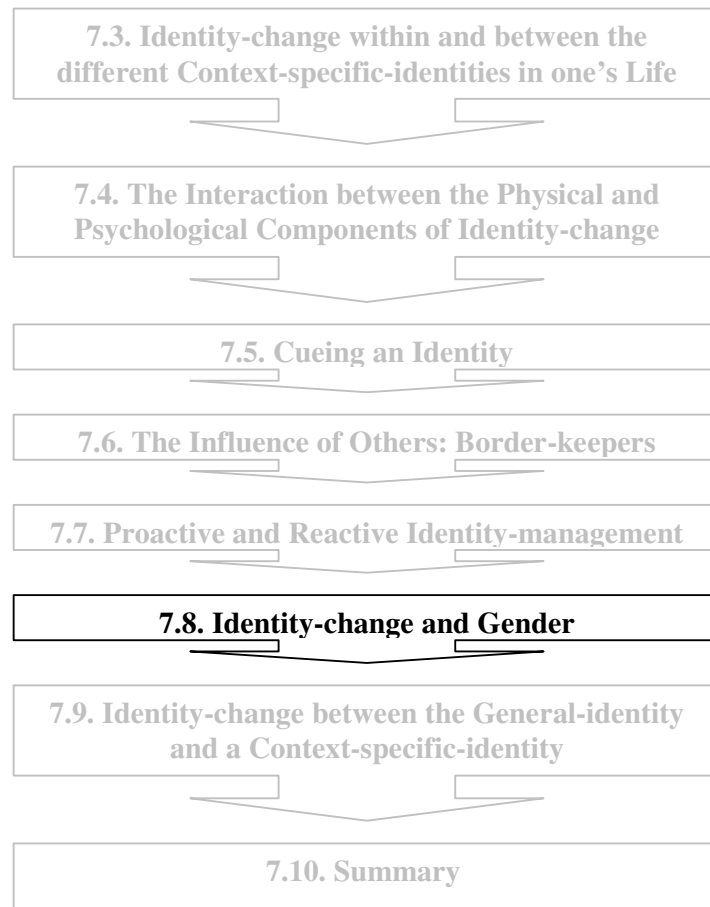
Figure 39. The structure of chapter seven: 7.8. Identity-change and gender

2001, pp.67). Within the labour force discourses are often utilised that privilege men over women (for example see Ainsworth and Hardy, 2008). This 'double burden' that women have in Western society is widely studied as a factor in their experiences of work-family conflict and hence lower satisfaction with life (Fredrikson-Goldon et al, 2001; Martins et al, 2002; Cutler and Jackson, 2002; Dessing, 2002; and Noor, 2002). A central factor affecting women's lower satisfaction with life due to their 'double burden' is that this work is not valued to the same extent as other work, for example paid employment. An example of this can be seen in Newfoundland, where families

employ stereotypical, traditional, patriarchal divisions of labour (Rehman, 2002). However, women in Newfoundland communities are proud and satisfied in their social roles because the Newfoundland culture respected and valued these social roles as much as any other, specifically men's social roles (Rehman, 2002). Problems immerge from the low value placed on 'women's work' in the home, in western society. In the workplace women receive less pay, generally, for the same human capital (CSO, 2006; 2007b; Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2002). When the lower wages that women receive is combined with patriarchal societal expectations it means that women's careers are more likely to end up taking a back seat in favour of care-giving, in heterosexual relationships (Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2002; Gallaway et al, 2002; Cutler et al, 2002). These factors may lead to men and women experiencing identity-change processes in different ways. These differences are caused by both internal factors, for example internalised norms regarding gender-specific behaviour, and external factors such as the structure of established social contexts and the expectations of, and feedback received from, others (Richter, 1990).

7.9. Identity-change between the General-identity and a Context-specific-identity

Finally, this chapter will discuss the processes by which an individual changes between a context-specific-identity and their general-identity (see figure 40). As described previously, the principle difference between the general-identity and the context-specific-identities is how the individual describes him/herself. A context-specific-identity will be described using the specific attributes relevant to that identity, and the general-identity will be described using a unique combination of attributes

7.3. Identity-change within and between the different Context-specific-identities in one's Life

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7.7. Proactive and Reactive Identity-management

7.8. Identity-change and Gender

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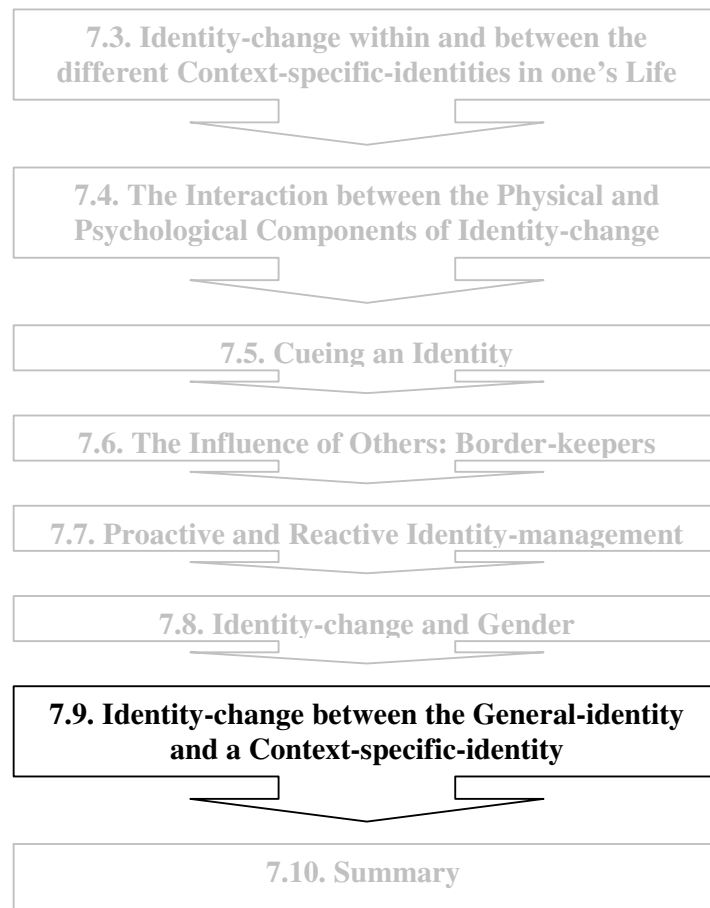
Figure 40. The structure of chapter seven: 7.9. Identity-change between the general-identity and a context-specific-identity

from several context-specific-identities (Roberts and Donahue, 1994). An identity-change between a context-specific-identity and the general- identity will occur where an individual's focus changes from their 'way of being' in a particular context to how or who they perceive themselves to be in general terms. This process may be similar to the process of depersonalisation. Depersonalisation is where an individual changes from thinking of themselves in terms of their perceived individuality to thinking of themselves in terms of a specific context or group, perhaps to the point where the individual's identity is almost interchangeable with another group member (Turner, 1982, cited in Haslam, 2002; Haslam, 2002).

7.10. Summary

This final chapter in the literature review focused on day-to-day identity-management. The identity-work an individual engages in on a day-to-day basis involves managing their identity-changes as they psychologically and/or physically change between different contexts, are influenced by internal or external cues, or change from the general-identity to a context-specific-identity by changing from a view of themselves in general to a view of themselves in relation to a specific context. The manner in which an individual manages their life will be affected by their preference for integrating or segmenting their identities and whether this preference is facilitated by the structure of the contexts involved. The individual's identity-changes will be influenced by other people within the contexts concerned, especially significant others and those with power over the individual.

The next chapter will now move to present the research question that provided the focus for the current research study.

8. Literature Review Summary and Research Question

8.1. The Position of Chapter Eight within Section A

2. Introduction to Section A

3. Identity in Sociohistorical Context

4. Identity in a Developmental Context: Childhood and Adolescence

5. Identity in a Developmental Context: Adulthood

6. Context-specific-identity-creation

7. Identity-management

8. Literature Review Summary and Research Question

9. Methodology
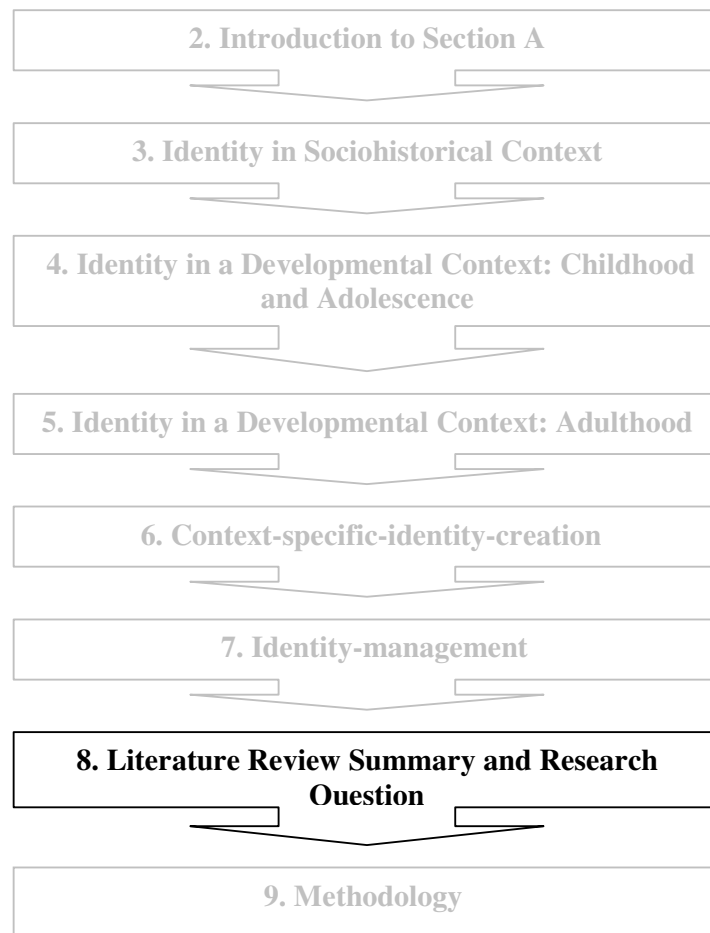
Figure 41. The structure of section A: Chapter eight. Literature review summary and research question

8.2. The Structure of Chapter Eight

Chapter eight will present a summary of the literature review and the research question that informs the research study presented in this thesis. The research question emanates both from the researcher's research interests and a reading of existing literature and research. As this thesis is not based upon a theory-led paradigm there
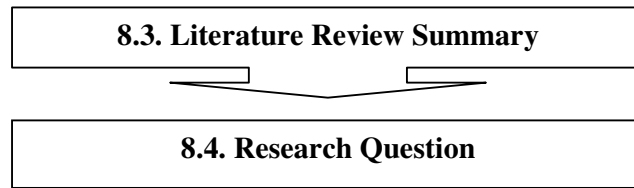
Figure 42. The structure of chapter eight

will not be a statement of hypothesises to be supported or not supported by the research results. The dominant part of the methodological framework, which will be presented in the next chapter, is a data-led qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews. For this type of study it is important to have a clear and coherent statement of a research question that drives the research, in order that a reader of this thesis may assess it in terms of how that research question has been dealt with.

8.3. Literature Review Summary

8.3. Literature Review Summary

8.4. Research Question
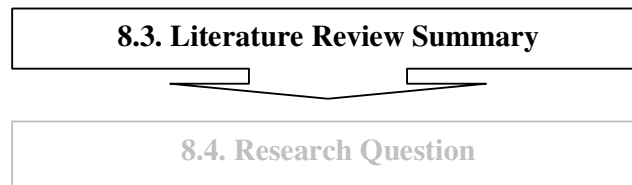
Figure 43. The structure of chapter eight: 8.3. Literature review summary

Before presenting the research question a summary of the literature review will be presented (see figure 43). In this summary of the literature review three distinct areas will be discussed. Firstly, literature relating to the structure of individual identity will be presented. Secondly, elements of the existing literature will be presented that focus on the factors influencing how an individual engages in processes

of identity-creation, in adulthood, when entering a new context, for example joining a new work organisation or entering an academic course in university. Finally, literature focusing on factors relating to how an individual manages the elements of their identity-portfolio on a regular basis will be presented.

8.3.1. Individual Identity-structure

Rather than simply present a view of the literature pertaining to typical adult identity structures and processes this thesis presents a view of individual identity within an appropriate cultural, sociohistorical and developmental context. This aids in the avoidance of the reification of certain concepts of identity, which exist within such contexts, as essential or universal.

From the existing literature and research presented in the literature review, a particular view emerges of individual identity, as it exists in the present sociohistorical period in Western culture (Baumeister, 1987; 1999; Cote and Levine, 2002; Kashima and Foddy, 2002). An adult's identity is typically a multidimensional, hierarchical structure, which is referred to as the identity-portfolio in this thesis. Viewing individual identity as multidimensional has had a place within the psychological literature dating back to James's (1890; 1999) recognition of the fact that "a man has as many selves as there are individuals who recognise him". However, it is only in the latter half of the twentieth century that social psychology has moved away from a view of identity as a unified, integrated, unidimensional entity (Harter et al, 1997; Markus and Nurius, 1986).

When viewing individual identity in an appropriate developmental context, however, it is clear that while adult identity is typically multidimensional, this is not the case at other points in the lifespan. In childhood an individual initially develops a

singular referential, general (Roberts and Donahue, 1994) or global (Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999) sense of him/herself. This is variously referred to in the existing literature as the global identity, global or general identity (Leonard et al, 1999), self, overall self, (Stryker and Serpe, 1994), general self, general self-concept or the total identity (Roberts and Donahue, 1994) and is referred to as the general-identity in this thesis. This general-identity is formed through interaction with the individual's primary reference group. The general-identity endures throughout the individual's lifespan, constantly and fluidly developing as they interact with elements of the world around them, and correspondingly engage in identity-work (Kroger and Haslett, 1991; Waterman and Archer, 1990, cited in Ashforth, 2001). Identity-work is defined as the "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, pp. 1165). Across the individual's lifespan it is the general-identity that provides a sense of coherence and consistency across time and in different situations. This is due to its function as a positively regarded, self-fulfilling template (Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999) through which any new situation or experience will be perceived and interpreted (Ashforth, 2001; McLean et al, 2007). An individual's general-identity can be seen as a source of motivation for that individual's behaviour, as they are motivated to maintain and enhance their internalized view of themselves (Ashforth, 2001; Gecas, 1982, cited in Leonard et al, 1999; Haslam, 2001; Korman, 1970, cited in Leonard et al, 1999; McLean et al, 2007).

An important aspect of the identity-work inherent in creating and maintaining one's general-identity is an individual's sense of who they wish to be, or not be, in the future. This has been referred to as the ideal self, idealized self, aspirational self or

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identity aspirations (Weinreich, 2003), an idealized image (Schlenker, 1985, cited in Leonard et al, 1999), possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Markus and Wurf, 1987) and is similar to the concepts of personal standards (Bandura, 1991, cited in Leonard et al, 1999) in the existing literature. Within this thesis this concept is referred to as an individual's possible future-identity-structures. Without a view of who one will be in the future one's sense of coherence and continuity as 'a person' will be compromised.

In a developmental context an individual begins to develop a multidimensional identity-structure (the identity-portfolio) in late childhood/adolescence (Harter, 1999) as the individual encounters different reference groups in different contexts, to which they may become affiliated (Roberts and Friend, 1998). The individual's identity-structure becomes increasingly differentiated as they create various context-specific-identities in order to deal effectively with the different roles and relationships that exist in these different contexts. This occurs due to the fact that the individual is motivated to utilise different behaviours, goals, interpersonal style, language etc. in order to meet the specific needs of the different contexts (Haslam, 2002; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Leonard et al, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996). This multidimensional identity-structure has been referred to in the existing literature as a parliament of selves (Mead, 1934, cited in Pratt and Foreman, 2000), a portfolio of selves (Ashforth, 2001), a portfolio of life roles (Louis, 1980), a self-theory (Santrock, 2006) a self-system, self-portrait (Harter, 1997) and personal epistemology (Harter, 1999). The individual's general-identity will provide input into the exact formation of a context-specific-identity, and it is this that gives the individual their sense of continuity across different contexts, and time (Leonard et al, 1999). However, as the individual remains in and develops that context-specific-identity it may provide input back to, and change, the

general-identity (Leonard et al, 1999). At this point the general-identity becomes non-context-specific as it becomes part of every context-specific-identity in the individual's identity-portfolio, as well as remaining accessible in its own right. This process continues across the individual's lifespan as they create new context-specific-identities and incorporate them into their identity-portfolio. The difference between the general-identity and the context-specific-identities is how the individual describes themselves as the context-specific-identities will be described using their specific attributes, and the general-identity will be described using a unique combination of attributes from several context-specific-identities (Roberts and Donahue, 1994). Throughout the individual's lifespan different circumstances and events will impact on their identity-portfolio and their engagement in processes of identity-creation and identity-management, for example marriage, having children, establishing a career, death of a parent, or retirement (Drigotas et al, 1999; Lachman 2004; Schaie and Willis, 1996; Seifert et al, 2004; Staudinger and Bluck, 2002).

These identities exist in a hierarchy based on their salience to the individual (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980; 1987; Stryker and Serpe, 1982), and defined as the probability that any given identity will be utilised in a given situation, or across a number of situations (Serpe, 1987). The salience, or subjective importance (Ashforth, 2001), of a context-specific-identity is a function of that individual's social and emotional commitment to that context (Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stryker, 1987; Van Dick et al, 2004). The general-identity is located at the top of the hierarchy, as it exists across the individual's life, regardless of situation or variable change. The identity hierarchy would then work through the individual's context-specific-identities on the basis of their salience to the individual.

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In summary, an individual will typically have a fully formed multidimensional, hierarchical identity-portfolio by late adolescence/early adulthood. The identity-portfolio can be seen, from a reading of existing literature, as being comprised of a non-context-specific element, the general-identity, and, typically, several context-specific-identities. The general-identity is comprised of an individual's general self-descriptions taken from their past socialisations and experiences and from the different contexts in their lives currently, and a context-specific-identity is made up of context-specific self-descriptions and created for the different contexts that exist in the individual's life.

8.3.2. Context-specific-identity-creation

When an individual, in adulthood, enters a new context, for example a work organisation or educational institution, they will consequently engage in the process of identity-creation in order that an appropriate context-specific-identity can be created for this new context. Several different sources of influence are noted in the existing literature and research with regard to those factors that impact on an individual's identity-portfolio during a time of identity-creation.

The existing literature and research points to the influence of the identity-work carried out by the individual themselves. The identity-creation process is affected by the individual's pre-emptive identity-work (Ashforth and Saks, 1996) in that they will form pre-emptive expectations about the new context (Louis, 1980). This will be influenced by the amount of experience the individual has with this type of context (Feldman and Arnold, 1978, cited in Cable and Parsons, 2001). The identity-creation process will also be influenced by any recent exiting of other contexts that may have occurred, for example retiring from one's job in order to return to university, as this

increases the overall amount of identity-work that must be accomplished. This process has been referred to, in the existing literature, as a process of unfreezing (Lewin, 1951, cited in Louis, 1980), moving away (Argyris, 1964, cited in Louis, 1980), letting go (Tannenbaum, 1976, cited in Louis, 1980), leavetaking (Van Gennep, 1960, cited in Ashforth, 2001) and disengagement (Ebaugh, 1988, cited in Ashforth, 2001). The degree of disorientation, sense of foreignness or sensory overload that an individual experiences when entering a new and possibly unfamiliar context will impact on the formation of their new context-specific-identity. This entry shock is referred to in the existing literature as reality shock (Hughes, 1958, cited in Louis, 1980), entry stress (Wanous, 1992) and surprise (Louis, 1980). If this entry shock is not dealt with effectively by the individual, for example through renegotiating their role in the context or changing their perception of their identity in the context, the identity-creation process may end at this point as they choose to leave the context in order to reduce the dissonance they are experiencing (Loius, 1980). How pro-active an individual is during the first few months, linked to their desire for control, will influence the form their new identity takes (Ashford and Black, 1996; Cable and Parsons, 2001). Also during the identity-creation process the individual may create a psychologically meaningful group in the new context (Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003). The members of this group then influence the formation of the individual's new context-specific-identity.

The existing literature and research also indicates the importance of the context's influence on the identity-creation process, both at a macro, organisational level (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Wheeler, 1966) and at group level (Saks and Ashforth, 1997). As the individual is socialised into the context they may acquire the attitudes, behaviour and knowledge needed to participate as a functioning

member of that context (Bauer, Morison and Callister, 1998; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). The type of socialisation tactics used by the context (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Wheeler, 1966), the self-management training it provides its entrants (Saks and Ashforth, 1997), the formal and informal feedback it provides its entrants (Louis, 1980) and the prescribed groups in which the context places its entrants will all influence the identity-creation process. The socialisation process utilised by the context may potentially influence the entrant to create a context-specific-identity such that it becomes aligned with the central values of the context (Cable and Parsons, 2001).

Dealing effectively with the early entry shock inherent in the socialisation will allow the individual to create a stable context-specific-identity, move from being a newcomer to an insider in the context (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wegner, 1991) and render "the new, the unexpected, the strange, and the frightening more or less ordinary" (Ashforth, 2001, pp. 18; Ashforth et al, 2000). The individual may then begin to build up rituals or routines around their membership of this context in order to stabilise their sense of themselves and the coherence and continuity of their identity-portfolio (Belk, 1988, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Silver, 1996, cited in Ashforth, 2001).

In summary, the form the individual's new context-specific-identity takes will be influenced by the interplay between the individual's identity-work and the influence of different elements within the new context. The form the new context-specific-identity takes will consequently have an impact on the individual's identity-portfolio as they necessarily make this new context-specific-identity part of 'who they are'.

8.3.3. Identity-management

Existing literature and research discuss several issues relating to how an individual manages their identity-portfolio, not during a once off identity-creation process, but on a regular, day-to-day basis. This day-to-day identity-management is associated, in the existing literature, with the identity-work involved in an individual's management of their self-perceptions within a particular context (Ashforth et al, 2000; Leonard et al, 1999) and with their identity-changes between different context-specific-identities (Ashforth et al, 2000; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996). The concept of identity-change is related to the concepts of "switching cognitive gears" (Louis and Sutton, 1991, pp. 55, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000), making a "psychological region shift" (Richter, 1990, pp. 149) border-crossing (Campbell-Clark, 2000), boundary-crossing (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al, 2000), crossing an abyss (Durkheim, 1965, cited in Ashforth et al 2000); unfreezing-movement-freezing (Lewin, 1951, cited in Ashforth et al 2000); crossing a bridge (Simmel, 1955, cited in Ashforth et al 2000); and as taking a cognitive leap between categories (Zerubavel, 1991). These concepts describe the individual as they psychologically disengage from one identity and (re)engage with another identity that is dissimilar to the first (Ashforth et al, 2000).

Many of the theorists who describe individual identity-changes utilise metaphors of physicality and movement such as borders/boundaries and border/boundary-crossing. These borders/boundaries are seen as being the "mental fences" (Zerubavel, 1991, pp. 7) or "lines of demarcation" between the contexts in an individual's life. From this perspective it is when an individual is engaging in border/boundary-crossing that they have to engage in boundary-work (Nippert-Eng, 1996) in order that the individual will utilise the appropriate identity in each context.

In this thesis the use of metaphors of physicality and movement will be avoided in order that the identity-structures and processes described will not be reified as stable and 'real' (Heracleous, 2004; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Paulsen and Hernes, 2003). Instead terminology relating directly to the concept of identity will be used, for example identity-management and identity-change. This also facilitates the integration of disparate areas of the existing literature that use different or incompatible terminology.

The existing literature highlights several phenomena that influence an individual's engagement in identity-management processes, as they attempt to maintain their sense of coherence and continuity. Processes of identity-management would be expected, from a reading of the existing literature, to be affected by the individual's preference for integrating or segmenting the different contexts in their life (Nippert-Eng, 1996). The individual's attempt to follow this preference is affected by factors relating to the ease with which two contexts can be integrated or segmented, for example due to the degree to which elements of one context may enter into another (Ashforth et al, 2000; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Hall and Ritchter, 1988). A related point made in the literature is that there is an interplay between the physical and psychological elements of identity-change (Richter, 1990) in terms of how an individual manages their physical movements between contexts and also how they respond to physical objects they encounter. This is due to the potential for an object, for example a clock, keys, a particular person or an element of an individual's daily routine, to cue or prime an associated identity (Forehand et al, 2002; Nippert-Eng, 1996). The interpersonal relationships an individual has in the contexts that exist in their life have an influence on identity-management, especially relationships with

significant others or those with power over the individual within a particular context (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Richter, 1990).

An individual's engagement in identity-management processes is affected by whether they utilise, and how effectively they utilise, proactive or adaptive identity-management strategies. Proactive strategies allow the individual to pre-emptively organise their lives such that the sense of coherence and consistency of their identity-portfolio is maintained, for example by changing one's own or others expectations about particular role demands within a context (Leonard et al, 1999; Richter, 1990). Adaptive or reactive identity-management strategies facilitate an individual's ability to deal with the dissonance or identity-struggle that occurs when an inappropriate identity-change is made or negative feedback is received in a particular context (Leonard et al, 1999; Markus and Kundra, 1986; Richter, 1990).

In summary, the existing literature presents a view of individual engagement in identity-management processes as involving both proactive and adaptive or reactive identity-work. An individual may proactively attempt to follow their preference for integration or segmentation, organise their routine, organise the physical content of various contexts and manage their interpersonal relationships with other context-members in order that their identity-changes may be as effortless as possible and the coherence and consistency of their identity-portfolio may be maintained. Where dissonance results from conflict with regard to any of the factors discussed above, adaptive or reactive identity-management strategies may be utilised by the individual in order to minimise or eliminate the dissonance being experienced and restore the coherence and consistency of the individual's identity-portfolio.

8.3.4. Summary

The existing literature relating to identity-structure, when placed in an appropriate developmental context, presents a view of individual identity-structure, in late adolescence/early adulthood having followed a typical developmental path, as being a multidimensional, hierarchical identity-structure. This identity-structure (the identity-portfolio) is made up of a non-context-specific-identity (the general-identity) and several context-specific-identities, created for the contexts existing in the individual's life. With specific regard to an individual, in adulthood, engaging in processes of identity-creation while entering a new context, the existing literature indicates the importance of the interplay between the identity-work being carried out by the individual and the influence exerted by the context and other individuals within that context. In relation to the ways in which an individual may engage in identity-management processes on a regular, day-to-day, basis, the existing literature highlights several issues, most importantly the individual's preference for integrating or segregating the contexts in their life, their relationships with other context-members in those contexts, and the proactive and adaptive identity-management strategies the individual utilises to maintain the coherence and consistency of their identity-portfolio.

The research question(s) presented below represent a combination of the author's research interests combined with a unique integration of existing literature as presented above. While the research question(s) draw on these sources in the existing literature, concepts referred to in the research question(s) are described using terminology that does not use metaphors of physicality and movement. This allows the different areas of the literature discussed above to 'speak' to one another such that they can effectively inform the research question(s) presented below.

8.4. Research Question

Figure 44. The structure of chapter eight: 8.4. Research question

Having presented a summary of the literature review the research question for the current research study will now be presented (see figure 44). The research question, as informed by a reading by the existing literature, in this thesis is the following:

What identity-creation and identity-management processes are involved in an individual's entry into a new organisational context?

This research question can be further broken down into three sub-questions:

1. Can an individual's identity be described as an identity-structure being divided up into a non-context-specific-identity and a number of context-specific-identities?

2. How is an individual's identity-structure affected by their entry into a new context and the associated process of identity-creation?

3. How does an individual manage their identity-structure on a day-to-day basis during a period of identity-creation?

The next chapter will present the methodology by which the research study presented in this thesis explored this research question.

9. Methodology

9.1. The Position of Chapter Nine within Section A

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        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │          2. Introduction to Section A           │
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        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │        3. Identity in Sociohistorical Context   │
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        │  4. Identity in a Developmental Context: Childhood │
        │                 and Adolescence                 │
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        │   5. Identity in a Developmental Context: Adulthood │
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        │         6. Context-specific-identity-creation   │
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        │              7. Identity-management             │
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        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │   8. Literature Review Summary and Research     │
        │                    Question                     │
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        │                 9. Methodology                  │
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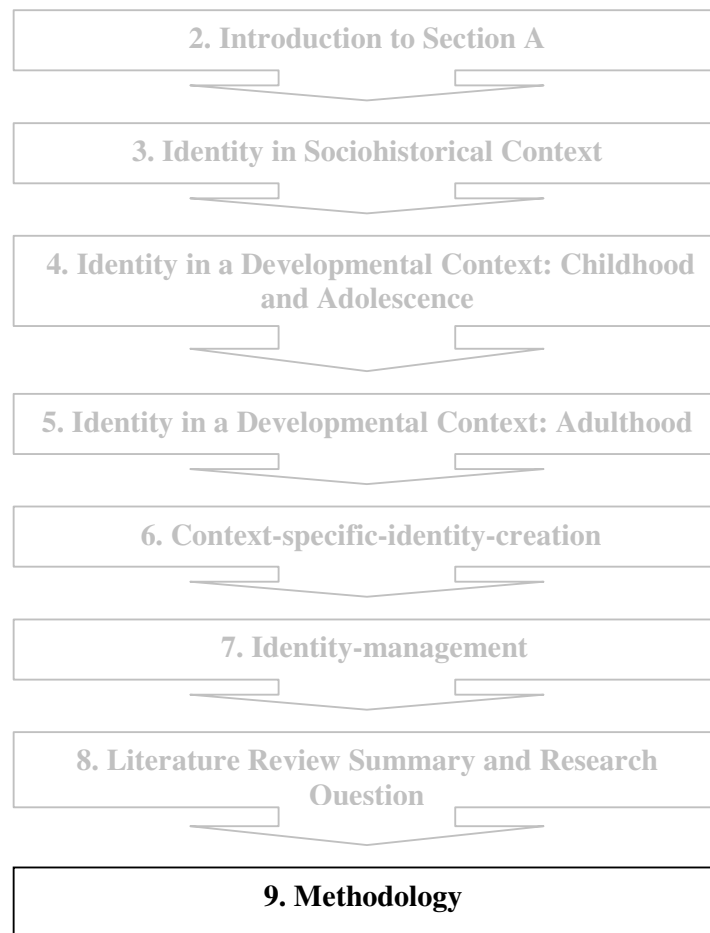
Figure 45. The structure of section A: Chapter nine. Methodology

Chapter nine, which is the final chapter of Section A, is the methodology (see figure 45) where, following on from the literature review and the statement of the research question, describes the methodological framework employed in the current research study.

9.2. The Structure of Chapter Ten

9.3. Philosophical Approaches to Research in the Social Sciences

9.4. Analytic Approach – Discourse Analysis and Discursive Psychology

9.5. Data Collection Methods

9.6. Instruments for Data Collection

9.7. The Study

9.8. Evaluating the Quality of the Research Results

9.9. Ethical Considerations

9.10. Summary
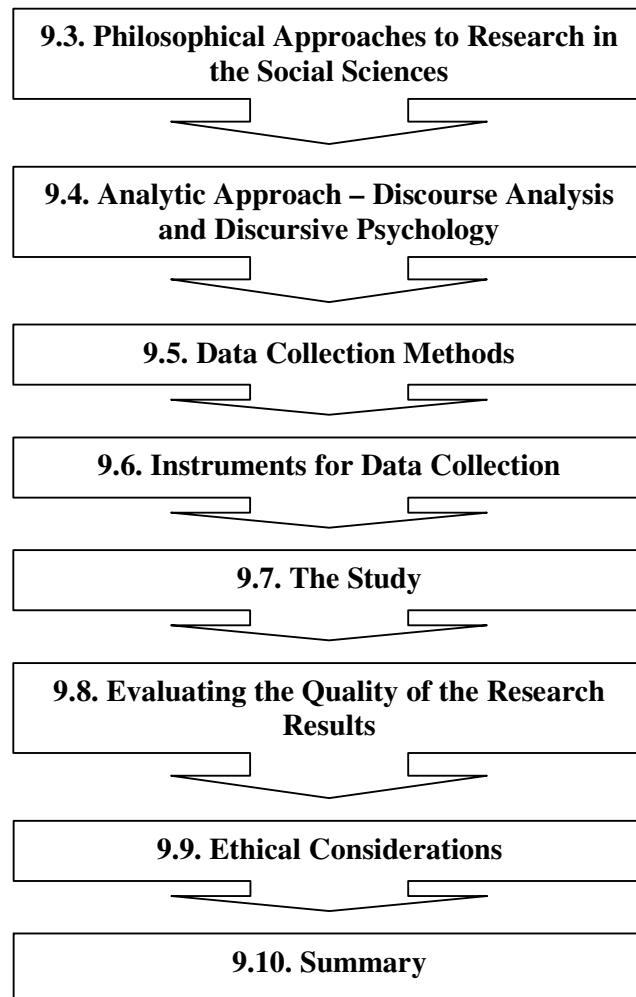
Figure 46. The structure of chapter nine

This chapter describes the methodological framework employed in the current research study (see figure 46), a framework that was created in order to effectively explore the identity-creation and identity-management processes involved in entering a new organisational context. The chapter initially describes the options available to social science researchers with regard to a research methodology, more specifically the different ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches that are available to researchers in the social sciences, along with the ontological,

epistemological and methodological positions taken in the current research study. The decisions made with regard to the various analytic approaches available to a social scientist will also be presented in this chapter, along with a description of the analytic approach ultimately chosen. Also presented in this chapter are two subsections dealing with the decisions made with regard to the data collection methods chosen for use in the current research study. These subsections chart the initial decisions made with regard to data collection methods and the development, revision and testing of these methods. They also include the choices made with regard to the identification of potential participants for the current research study, along with the details of the thirty-four participants who ultimately participated in the study. The longitudinal study itself is presented in this chapter, along with how the resulting data was prepared for analysis and then analysed. The last two subsections of the methodology describe the ways in which the current research study has attempted to produce an analysis of participant data that is of high quality and how the current research study has taken appropriate ethical considerations into account at each step of the research process. Finally a summary of the methodology chapter will be presented.

In summary this chapter will present the decisions that were made with regard to this current research programme and will describe the research methodology that emerged from this process.

9.3. Philosophical Approaches to Research in the Social Sciences

The various philosophical approaches that may be applied to research being carried out in the social sciences will be discussed in this subsection of chapter nine (see figure 47). Choices made with regard to methodology, in the social sciences, are

Figure 47. The structure of chapter nine: 9.3. Philosophical approaches to research in the social sciences

informed by certain ontological and epistemological assumptions. The form a research methodology will take is largely shaped by the choice between different methodological approaches. This choice is frequently described, in the literature, as the choice between quantitative and qualitative approaches (see table 8). However, this distinction is an oversimplified one, and this stereotypical division between quantitative and qualitative as a pure dichotomy is often not useful. The typical philosophical divisions between the two are not always accurate, for example, due to

Table 8. Typically described differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Basic definition	The analysis of words/images	Involves the analysis of numbers
When to use them	Narrow (few people) but in-depth (rich, detailed data)	Broad (many people) but not in-dept (relatively shallow data)
Origins	Started as countermovement to quantitative. Connected with constructivist, interpretive and post-modern approaches	Originate from the positivist, experimental/empiricist paradigms
Type of logic most typically used	Inductive logic	Deductive logic
Type of approach most commonly used	Data-led approach (except for theory-led qualitative analysis)	Theory-led approach
Ontological assumptions (what is the nature of reality?)	Socially constructed multiple realities	A singular, verifiable reality and truth
Epistemological Assumptions (or what is the relationship of the researcher to that researched?)	acknowledge the researcher's influence on and interaction with the research process	"objectivity" is key. the researcher must remain apart and distant from what is being researched
Methodologies	utilise inductive logic to explore the context-specific data that produces categories that have emerged from the participants, rather than being "discovered" by the researcher	utilise predetermined hypotheses/theories that will be proven or disproved through the use of deductive logic
Types of data	existing texts verbal utterances Drawing, photographics Video Observations	Numerical data
Methods	Interview Focus-group Diary Observation	Quantitative Survey, Experimental Study, Quasi-Experimental Study

the existence of theory-led qualitative analysis, and in many cases research can benefit from using both methodologies to examine the issues at hand (Punch, 2005; Silverman, 2001). It is more accurate to describe the distinctions between methodological approaches in terms of theory-lead and data-led approaches (see table 9). Theory-led approaches originate from the positivist, experimental/empiricist paradigms whereas data-led approaches, which began as a countermovement to the traditional theory-led approaches, are connected with the constructivist, interpretive and post-modern approaches (Flick, 2006). These approaches differ on several

dimensions. With regard to the ontological assumptions of the two approaches, the theory-led approaches traditionally view reality as objective and discoverable, and as something apart from the researcher. Data-led approaches view reality as subjective and constructed by and between people. Therefore there can be multiple realities or readings of a situation (Creswell, 1994; Punch, 2005; Sarantakos, 1993; Taylor, 2001). Connected to this is the stance taken, by the respective paradigms, with regard to epistemological issues. Theory-led approaches are grounded in the belief that 'objectivity' is key, that the researcher must remain apart and distant from what is being researched. Markedly different, due to its ontological roots, the data-led approach acknowledges the researcher's part in the research process, their influence on and interaction with the process, their values, preconceptions, etc., and includes these in their study, along with an acknowledgement of the value laden nature of the information that has been gathered (Creswell, 1994; Punch, 2005; Sarantakos, 1993; Silverman, 2001; Taylor, 2001). These distinctions lead to equally distinct methodologies, with a theory-led methodology utilising predetermined hypotheses that will be proven or disproved through the use of deductive logic (Creswell, 1994; Punch, 2005; Sarantakos, 1993; Silverman, 2001), and a data-led approach utilising inductive logic to explore the context-specific data that produces categories that have emerged from the participants, rather than being 'discovered' by the researcher in a search for rich, in-depth information that is seen to lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon under review (Creswell, 1994; Sarantakos, 1993; Silverman, 2001).

Table 9. Theory-led and Data-Led Approaches

Theory-led Approaches	Data-led Approaches
Quantitative Survey	Data-led Qualitative Study
Experimental Study	Mixed Methods
Quasi-Experimental Study	
Theory-led Qualitative Study	
Mixed Methods	

The current research study utilises a data-led, interpretative method of inquiry. This method of inquiry is more appropriate for a research study investigating concepts related to individual identity structures and processes as deductive, theory-led approaches draw more on research methods and traditions based on methods from the natural sciences, which would tend to reify concepts such as identity as material entities. An individual's identity is "not a material entity that is subjected to natural forces, but is an experiential location in continually changing successive social contexts of arrays of others (Weinreich, 2003, pp. 35). Therefore, to effectively study identity-related concepts it is more appropriate and beneficial to adopt the ontological

and epistemological assumptions of the data-led paradigm. A data-led method of inquiry also allows more scope for dealing with unexpected and unexplored phenomena that may arise within the data collection and analysis process than would a deductive, theory-led approach.

There is an increasing recognition, in several fields of research, of the utility of carrying out in-depth, data-led research. Qualitative research is an identifiable field in itself, as can be seen in the numerous books published in this area and dedicated qualitative research journals such as "Qualitative Inquiry", "Qualitative Research", "The qualitative Report" and "International Journal of Qualitative Methods". Many distinct subfields beneath the umbrella term of qualitative research exist as fields of study in their own right, such as discourse analysis, as can be seen in the numerous books published in this area and dedicated discourse analysis journals such as "Discourse Studies", "Discourse & Society", "Discourse Processes" and "Discourse and Communication". In other fields of research, for example Education, the increased interest in and use of data-led, qualitative methods of inquiry can be seen in the existence of education journals specifically focused on qualitative work, such as "International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education" and "Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education" and other education journals that publish data-led, qualitative articles, such as "Academy of management Learning and Education", "Education and Training" and "Education and Urban Society". This can also be seen as being the case in the area of organisational behaviour/management studies with specialist journals such as "Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management", and an increase in the publication of data-led qualitative studies in journals such as the "Academy of Management Journal" and the "British Journal of Management". Other fields where there is increasing recognition of the utility of data-led qualitative

research are health studies (especially with regard to nursing), the area of counselling and psychotherapy and feminist studies. The method of inquiry chosen in the current research study is both appropriate for the concepts under examination and is being increasingly recognised, in a number of fields, as valuable to the furthering of social scientific understanding.

A multiple method design was utilised in the current research study, as an initial, non-statistical, quantitative survey supports the dominant part of the research study, which utilises data-led qualitative semi-structured interviewing. The process of selecting and developing these methodological tools for the current research study will be described in further detail below. The aim of the current research is to produce rich, in-depth data that will facilitate an increased understanding of the identity-creation and identity-management processes involved in entering into a new organisational context. The research adopts a phenomenological and idiographic approach, in that the research focuses on the subjective experiences of the participants, and not on the exploration of an objective 'reality', and that individual case studies were the unit of analysis.

This research is data-driven, and not structured by prior theory, to the extent that the content of this research is informed by, and had a strong grounding in, existing literature, but any results or theoretical model produced by this research emerge from the analysis of the data. The existing literature facilitates the research in its formation of the Life Domain Study Booklet (LDSB), which is the title of the quantitative survey used (see appendix 1), and the questions asked in the interviewing process, as is the case in any well researched semi-structured interview schedule. However, where a participant presents information that is not in the interviewer's schedule, this is welcomed and explored.

In line with Creswell's (1994) reasons for working from a particular paradigm, the data-led qualitative approach is in line with the researcher's world view, training and experience, psychological attributes and the nature of the topics under review.

9.4. Analytic Approach – Discourse Analysis and Discursive Psychology

This subsection of the methodology will present the different analytic approaches that were considered for the current research study and how the decision was made to utilise discourse analysis, and more specifically discursive psychology (see figure 48). There are many options available to a social scientist with regard to choosing the most appropriate method of data collection and analysis. Several methods of data analysis were considered for this research (see table 10). These included quantitative analytic approaches, theory-led thematic analysis, data-led thematic analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis, grounded theory and discourse analysis. Due to the current research study's focus on an individual's perspective and how they construct their identity through language and within certain contexts, discourse analysis, and more specifically discursive psychology, was chosen as the method of analysis in the current research study. The other possible analytic approaches were rejected due to their inability to provide a sufficient focus on how participants constructed themselves and their social reality.

9.3. Philosophical Approaches to Research in the Social Sciences

9.4. Analytic Approach – Discourse Analysis and Discursive Psychology

9.5. Data Collection Methods

9.6. Instruments for Data Collection

9.7. The Study

9.8. Evaluating the Quality of the Research Results

9.9. Ethical Considerations

9.10. Summary

Figure 48. The structure of chapter nine: 9.4. Analytic approach – discourse analysis and discursive psychology

"Discourse is core to social science method and becoming knowledgeable about discourse theory enhances and transforms ways of being a social scientist and doing research" (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001a, pp. 4). Discourse analysis is a vehicle that can be used in finding "out how consequential bits of social life are done and this knowledge is relevant to the process of building knowledge and theory in the social sciences" (Wetherell et al, 2001a, pp. 5).

Discourse analysis can be defined as the study of language in use (Potter, 2003; Taylor, 2001; Wetherell et al, 2001a). "Another relatively

Table 10. Options considered with regard to the method of analysis of participant data

Analytic Approach	Utility of Analytic Approach	Reasons for Acceptance or Rejection of the Approach
Quantitative Analytic Approaches	A large number of participants can be studied at a relatively shallow level	Not suitable for smaller numbers of participants. Would not achieve the desired depth in exploring participant's constructions
Theory-led Thematic Analysis	Allows for a pre-stated model or hypothesis to be supported or not supported	Analysis would be tied to pre-stated model or hypothesis/hypothesises
Data-led Thematic Analysis	Analysis uncovers patterns or themes in participant data	The uncovering of themes would not have a sufficient focus on how participants construct themselves/their identity
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Allows for the analysis of participant lived experiences	A focus on participant's lived experiences would not have a sufficient focus on how participants construct themselves/their identity
Discourse Analysis/Discursive Psychology	Allows for the analysis of participants construction of themselves and their social reality	This analytic approach allows for a sufficient focus on the way in which participants construct themselves, their identity and their social reality
Grounded Theory	Analysis allows for the production of a theory grounded in the qualitative data	This analytic approach would not facilitate a sufficient focus on how participants construct themselves/their identity

straightforward response is to say that the study of discourse is the study of human meaning making" or the study of the production of meaning in social life (Wetherell et al, 2001a, pp. 3). This is a broader definition from that given above, as it is no longer focused entirely on language use per se, for example a group of people queuing

up and using a self-service checkout in a supermarket are using the meaning-making frames and technologies of modern convenience shopping and norms regarding social order to coordinate their activities even though there may be very little talk or writing going on (Wetherell et al, 2001a). Discourse analysis analyses how language is used to construct the social world (Potter, 1997; 2003), that is to say that "to 'do' social life is to 'do' discourse" (Wetherell et al, 2001a, pp. 4). It is this focus on individual construction of social reality that makes the discourse analysis method an appropriate choice for analysing data relating to how individuals describe themselves and their identity, and how they describe their engagement in processes of identity-creation and identity-management.

Studying discourse, like any scientific investigation is about the discovery and theorization of pattern and order (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell et al, 2001a). The principal characteristic that distinguishes discourse analyses from other data analyses is not the process of analysis itself but the analytic concepts involved, which are derived from the research's theoretical location (Taylor, 2001). Analytic concepts emerge from the underlying theoretical tradition, research questions etc., and as the discourse analyst searches for patterns in language in use, they are building upon and making reference to the assumptions they have made about the nature of language, interaction and society, as well as the interrelationship between them (Taylor, 2001). The current research study's research question was described in chapter eight, along with a summary of the previous literature that informed that research question.

The current research study is focused on how social actors construct themselves in terms of the structure of their identity and their engagement in identity-creation and identity-management processes. There is a focus on the "pattern within language in use, the set or family of terms which are related to a particular topic or

activity" (Taylor, 2001, pp. 8). The topic in this case can be seen as being identity and the activities can be seen as being those of identity-creation and identity-management. The current research study utilises language as a resource, using it to study the identity related issues discussed above, rather than studying language as a topic in itself (Taylor, 2001). The focus of this study is on investigating content, rather than the process of interaction. This leads to a focus on the "recurring elements in the body of talk" rather than the "connections between consecutive utterances" that a focus on process would produce (Taylor, 2001, pp. 15). In summary the current research study is not focusing on linguistics but instead the study is grounded in the social psychological expectation that a better understanding of social life and social interaction can emerge from a study of social texts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

In terms of how the current research study conceptualises the participants from whom the data is collected, their discourse is seen as "a fluid, shifting medium in which meaning is created and contested. The participant is not a detached communicator, sending out and receiving information, but is always located, immersed in this medium and struggling to take her or his own social and cultural positioning into account" (Taylor, 2001, pp. 9). In keeping with previous discourse analytic work it is acknowledged, in the current research study, that the researcher is not a neutral party in the research carried out. The researcher influences the research process as it took place and was influenced in turn by the research process. The researcher strove to be self-aware, to be able to step-back and observe himself within the research process and to understand the role the researcher had in influencing the research situation. It is also acknowledged that the researcher's identity is relevant to the research, for example the topics under examination were chosen, to some extent, on the basis that they were part of, or were in some way in accordance with, the

researcher's personal ontological and epistemological stance. The researcher had the double role of interviewer and analyst, allowing the researcher to bring knowledge and experience of the interview into the analytic process.

"Discourse analysis is best understood as a field of research rather than a single practice" (Taylor, 2001, pp. 5), and under this umbrella term there are many different discourse traditions. Many of these traditions are still developing as discourse analysis is still a very recent and embryonic area, especially compared to some other research approaches in social science. These traditions are, as identified by Wetherell et al (2001a): conversation analysis and ethnomethodology; interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication; discursive psychology; critical discourse analysis and critical linguistics; Bakhtinian research; and Foucauldian reaserch. The order in which these discourse traditions have been named here also represents a continuum from those areas focused on the nature of language to those focused more on social life to those examining discourse regarding more macro issues of culture and power in social relations. From these research traditions the current research study draws upon the tradition of discursive psychology.

9.4.1. Discursive Psychology

Discursive psychology can be described as the application of the ideas found in discourse analysis to issues in psychology (Potter, 1998; 2003). While many psychologists have traditionally been interested in individuals' underlying or internal competence, and have seen language as a code representing internal thoughts and actions, discursive psychology moves away from this view, seeing language as social action or performance (Edwards, 1997; Harre and Stearns, 1995; Horton-Salway, 2001; Potter, 2003). The development of discursive psychology has been influenced

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by rhetorical approaches to psychology and developments in the area of constructionism (Potter, 1998; 2003). In summary discursive psychology "moves the theoretical and analytic focus from individual cognitive events and processes to situated interaction" (Hepburn and Wiggens, 2005, pp. 595).

9.5. Data Collection Methods

This chapter (see figure 49) has previously stated that the current research study utilises a multiple method design, informed by a data-led paradigmatic approach. There will now be a more in-depth description of how these methods were chosen, and were developed, in the current research study.

The process of choosing a method of data collection involved the examination of a number of different options (see table 11) from those most frequently used by data-led qualitative researchers. These methods included diary research, observation methods, examining existing texts (e.g. official documents), interviews, and also the possible combination of a number of these methods (Silverman, 2001). A number of these options, or combinations of these options, could have been utilised in the current research study, in terms of obtaining rich and interesting data on the processes of identity-creation and identity-management, in an effective manner. However, taking into consideration both the aim of the research study, to obtain rich, in-depth data on how individuals construct themselves in terms of their identity and how they construct
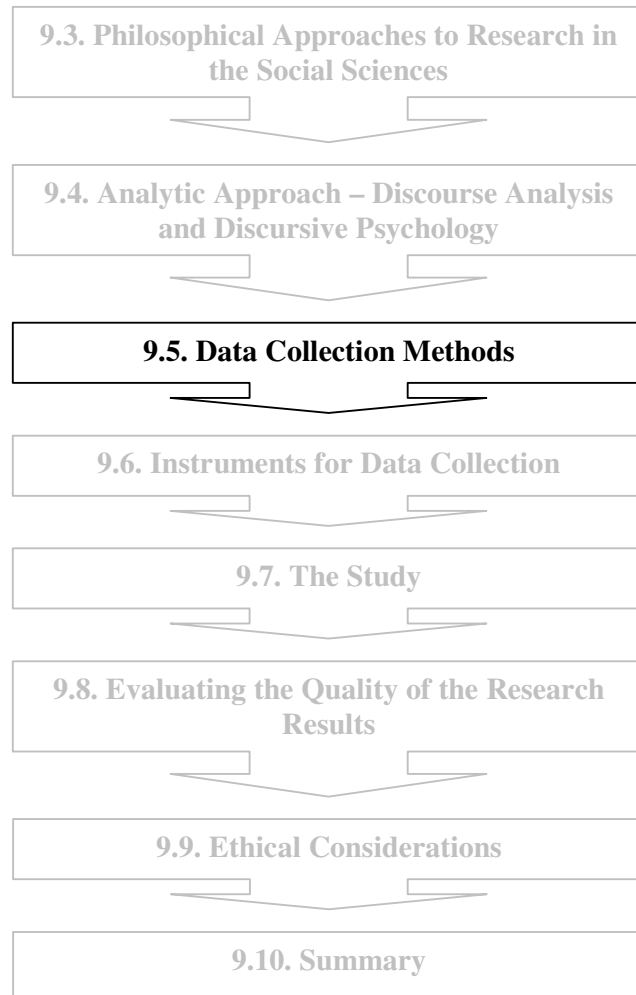
Figure 49. The structure of chapter nine: 9.5. Data collection methods

their engagement in processes of identity-creation and identity-management, and the time and resource constraints of the research, the choice was made to utilise semi-structured qualitative interviewing to collect the research data. This method of data-collection allows the researcher to be present during data collection and to utilise a degree of structure in order that topics of interest are covered, while maintaining the flexibility to adapt the interview to the data the participant is providing. The core

Table 11. Methods of data collection considered in the current research study

Method of Data Collection	Utility of Data Collection Method	Reasons for Acceptance or Rejection of Data Collection Method
Diary Research	Participants can add to the data being collected on a regular basis and close to the occurrence of experiences	Absence of researcher during data-collection. Participant responses may be too shallow
Participant Observation	Researcher becomes part of the context and observes participants as an active member of their group	This method would not facilitate the collection of data related to specific participant constructions regarding their identity.
Direct Observation	The researcher can unobtrusively observe the participants behaviour etc.	This method would not facilitate the collection of data related to specific participant constructions regarding their identity.
Examination of texts	Existing texts can be analysed without having to engage in a lengthy data-collection process	Texts relating to participant constructions of their identity did not exist or were not readily accessible. Therefore this method was practically not viable for the current research study.
Open interviews	The researcher provides minimal input and the participant can freely discuss the subjects under consideration. The researcher is present to guide the process	This method may not have provided sufficient focus on the specific participant constructions regarding their identity which were of interest to the researcher
Semi-structured interviews	The researcher provides a fluid, flexible structure on the interview that is focused on particular topics of interest. The researcher is present to guide the process	This method of data collection is appropriate for the current research study as it allows for a focus on topics of interest while maintaining the flexibility to discuss unexpected topics that participants bring up.
Focus groups		Participants may not have readily discussed sensitive issues relating to their self-perceptions, identity etc. in a group environment

features of qualitative interviewing will now be presented, followed by more detailed

reasons for utilising qualitative interviewing in this research

9.5.1. Data-led Qualitative Interviewing: Conversation with a Purpose

Interviewing has been used in psychological research since it's earliest times (Hayes, 2000), and it is the most commonly used research method in qualitative psychology (Mason, 2002a; Punch, 2005). When one refers to these "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1984, pp. 102) this usually means the interview is in-depth and semi-structured, however within this there are many different approaches one may use in carrying out such interviews (Mason, 2002a).

9.5.1.1. Core Features of Qualitative interviewing

This interactive, situational and generative approach to the acquisition of data (Mason, 2002b) has a number of core features. Data-led qualitative interviewing involves interaction between at least two people and an exchange of dialogue (Mason, 2002a; 2002b). The interview could be with one individual or several, in group interviews or focus groups. The interview can take place face to face, or electronically, through the use of phone, video-calling or using communication technology on the internet.

The style of a data-led qualitative interview is relatively speaking informal, however this does not mean the interview is unstructured, and the interview will be centred around particular themes or topics, in order to explore certain stories, narratives or biographies. While the researcher may not have a rigid, prepared, list or script of questions beforehand there will be a fluid structure of questions or interview strategies designed to illicit data on the themes, topics or narratives desired. In data-led qualitative interviewing the importance of context is a central theme, that is to say that knowledge is situated and contextual and that interviewing involves the creation

of meanings and understanding as knowledge is constructed or reconstructed between the researcher and interviewee(s) (Mason, 2002a).

9.5.1.2. Choosing Qualitative Interviewing

Several reasons lay behind the choice to utilise data-led qualitative interviewing as the main method for data collection. The main reason was the stance taken, by the current research study, on the nature of human existence and the source, nature and limitations of knowledge.

Qualitative interviewing was chosen as the principle method of inquiry because the current research study has taken the ontological position that "people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality" (Mason, 2002a, pp. 63), and that the research study aimed to explore these. It was the participant populations' perceptions, as expressed through language, in which the current research study was interested.

The choosing of data-led qualitative interviewing involved the adoption of an epistemological position that facilitated interactive dialogue, asking the participants questions, listening to their answers, taking down their narratives or subjective accounts and the analysis of their language use and construction of discourse as valid and purposeful ways to produce data on these ontological properties (Mason, 2002; Punch, 2005). The data related to the participants' perceptions on the issues at hand, gathered though interview, can only show the construction or reconstruction of their social reality and may not be treated as a direct 'conduit' to an objective reality (Mason, 2002).

Due to the "textual, situational and interactional" nature of knowledge (Mason, 2002, pp. 64), the research method was kept as flexible as possible with

regard to the interview and the construction of knowledge in context that occurred therein. Data-led qualitative interviewing affords this flexibility by not requiring a rigid, heavily structured script etc. and allowing the researcher to "roll with the punches" by taking cues from the interviewee and the data being produced, as it's produced.

The use of this method indicates that this research is not attempting to eliminate 'bias' in the interview, as structured interviews or questionnaires might, but that it is recognised that the interview is inseparable from it's context, which is the social interaction from which it came (Mason, 2002a). This point is linked to the view of the researcher as an active participant in the process and not a neutral gatherer of data who does not influence the data and whose role does not need to be analysed (Mason, 2002a).

An important consideration in the choice to use this method of data collection was the desired depth or richness of the data. In order to achieve the desired depth, this approach gave both the researcher and the participants more freedom to engage in the data collection process and to be fully active in the generation of data. In this way the research was able to produce a more equalitarian view of the perceptions of the participant (Mason, 2002b).

There were also pragmatic reasons for utilising data-led qualitative interviewing as a method of data collection. The current research study explores issues that were often sensitive or part of the participant's private life and therefore face-to-face interviews were deemed to be the most effective method of data collection. Data-led qualitative interviewing allowed the researcher to emphasise the confidentiality of the research, and to explore sensitive or personal issues in a manner appropriate to each participant, 'rolling with the punches' where a participant didn't

want to explore a certain area, wanted to bring up unexpected avenues of conversation, or wanted to explore a certain topic in a particular way. This is to say that this method allowed the researcher "room for active intervention" in the data-collection process (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 163).

Other methods of data collection, for example, diary keeping, could have been used in conjunction with qualitative interviewing. However, had this method been chosen for the current research study the amount of data produced could not have been successfully analysed using the resources available for the completion of the current research study.

9.6. Instruments for Data Collection

The instruments developed for data collection in the current research study will be discussed in this subsection (see figure 50). A multi-method design is utilised in the current research study, as both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in data collection. A written answer booklet, the Life Domain Study Booklet (LDSB), was developed as a support for the principle method of data collection, data-led qualitative, semi-structured interviews. This use of a multi-method approach allows the research to benefit from methodological triangulation (Punch 2005; Sarantakos, 1993). The quantitative element of the current research study facilitates the qualitative element of the research. This can be seen as a 'dominant/less dominant design', as the study is principally qualitative but utilises a small, supportive
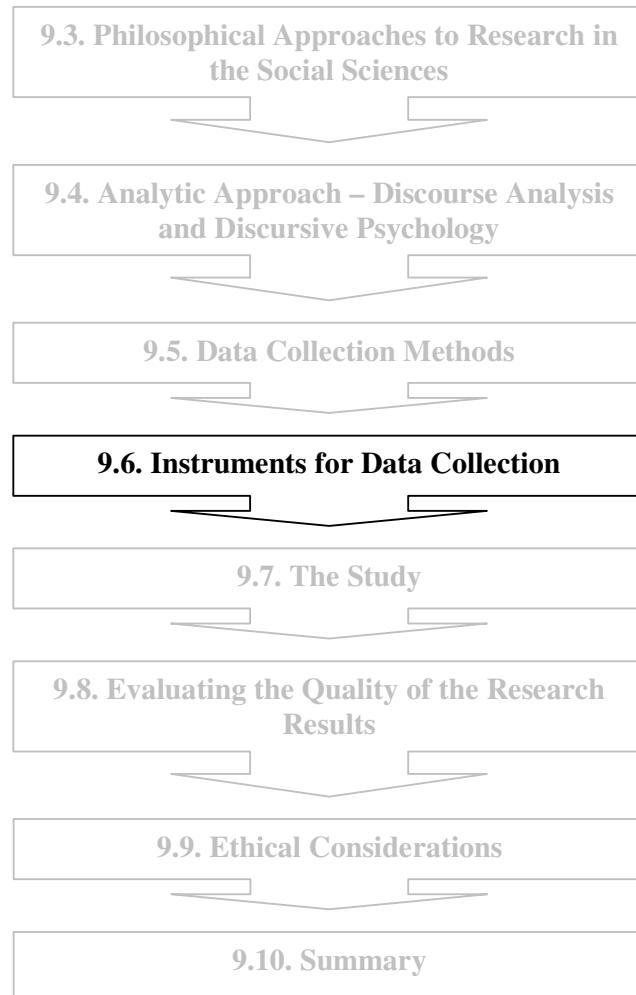
Figure 50. The structure of chapter nine: 9.6. Instruments for data collection

quantitative component (Creswell, 1994). Studies where similar multi-method approaches can be seen are Smith (1994; 1997; 1999) where qualitative diaries and interviews were employed along with repertory grids, and Harter and Monsour (1992) where the main source of data came from interviews that were based on a quantifiable diagram that participants had initially completed.

9.6.1. Development of Instruments

Initially the proposed instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview that covered all the theoretical topics involved in the current research study. The process of creating this interview schedule began by creating a list of questions that covered every possible facet of the metatheoretical influences that informed the project. This list was then adapted to transform jargon in the theoretical areas involved into appropriate everyday language and to remove unnecessary questions and repetition.

9.6.1.1. Discussing Motivation in the initially developed Semi-structured Interview

A section of the initially developed interview involved the exploration of what the participants' perceived as motivating them within the different parts of their lives. In order to provide a jumping off point for the discussion of participant motivators the research study developed an activity based on the integrative taxonomy of motivation developed in the self-concept based work motivation metatheory of Leonard et al (1999) and operationalized in the Motivation Sources Inventory (MSI) developed by Barbuto and Scholl (1998). The MSI has subsequently been used in several studies (Barbuto, 2001; Barbuto, Fritz and Marx, 2001; Barbuto, Fritz and Marx, 2002; Barbuto and Scholl, 1999). Several ways of utilising the MSI as a springboard that would facilitate a discussion of participant perceptions were explored, including simply utilising a long series of interview questions and using critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954; Hopkinson and Hogarth-Scott, 2001). Finally a card-sorting task was chosen as a suitable way of exploring the participants' motivational profiles (similar to that used in the Organisational Culture Profile [O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991] where forty values, written on cards, have to be sorted into nine

categories). In this case words were derived from descriptions of the motivators in Leonard et al's (1999) article and from the items of Barbuto and Scholl's (1998) MSI by sorting the items into groups in terms of the respective motivational sources they represented, and then reducing these down to two keywords that best represented each motivational source (see table 12).

Table 12. Words in card-sorting task for examining individual motivational sources, and their associated motivational sources

Meet my own standards (internal self-concept	Values (goal internalisation)
Beliefs (goal internalisation)	Enjoying myself (intrinsic)
Recognition (external self-concept)	Money (instrumental)
Personal achievement (internal self-concept)	Approval (external self-concept)
Fun (intrinsic)	Extrinsic rewards (instrumental)

Definitions of the words were also to be kept to hand if a participant needed further clarification of the meaning of the words (see table 13). During the interview the participant was to be asked to choose five of the ten words to represent what was most important to them in the particular part of their life that was under discussion, for example one's family, and then was to be asked to briefly explain their choice. The participant was then to be asked to remove three of the cards/words to leave the two words that would best represent what was important to them in that part of their life, and having done so was to be asked again to explain their choice. The participant was then to be asked to remove one of the remaining cards/words leaving the word that would best represent what was important to them in that part of their life, and was again to be asked for a brief explanation. This process could then be repeated for each perceived part of the individual's life. The words that had been used during the

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exercises could be examined in terms of the motivational sources they represented in order to inform the interviewer as to the structure of the individual's motivational source profile. The aim here was that the choosing of the motivational sources, and the formation of context-specific motivational profiles, by the participant would facilitate a discussion where the participant could produce a narrative regarding what motivated them within a particular context in their life.

Table 13. Definitions of words in the card-sorting task

Meet your own standards:	Matching the example that one uses to judge and measure oneself
Values:	One's moral principles
Enjoying myself:	To take joy in what one does
Recognition:	To be noticed; To have others show appreciation
Beliefs:	Principle; What one accepts as true or real
Money:	Medium of exchange, coins or banknotes
Personal Achievement:	To accomplish one's goal(s) through hard work or ability
Approval:	To gain others favourable opinion
Fun	Enjoyment or amusement
Extrinsic Rewards:	Material rewards other than money

9.6.2. Piloting of Initial Semi-structured Interview

Initial piloting revealed that, while useful in gathering appropriate data, the interview was deemed to be too long, at approximately seventy minutes, as to be practical, given the target sample.

9.6.3. Development of a Written Answer Booklet

The interview schedule was developed into a written answer booklet, in order to explore if this would be a more efficient means of initially collecting data regarding the individual's perceptions of their identity and processes of identity creation and identity-management. This involved the transformation of the motivational sources card-sorting task into a pencil and paper task. It was envisioned that the written answer booklet would be completed by participants in order to gather appropriate data regarding their identity and processes of identity-creation and identity-management, and that this would then form the basis of a follow up semi-structured interview.

Following on from feedback received from academic advisors further review and reformulation took place of the tools to be used for data collection.

9.6.4. Life Domain Study Booklet (LDSD) and Semi-structured Interviews

The previously created written answer booklet was adapted by reducing its size and scope in order that it would focus on the collection of basic information from participants regarding the structure of their lives (see appendix 1). Where participants were asked to divide up their life into a number of different parts, no restriction was imposed on what participants could include as a life part, nor on how these were labelled. As a consequence it was envisioned that, at the analysis stage, the participant descriptions of their life parts in the LDSB would most likely have to be re-organised into/under appropriate umbrella categories, in order to analyse and present them more easily, due to the fact that no restriction was being placed on what form they could take. The LDSB takes approximately twenty minutes to complete, although this does depend on the individual.

The data gathered by the LDSB informed the researcher as to the participants' individual perceptions of the structure of their lives and helped to guide the semi-structured interview (see appendix 2), which took place at a later date. The LDSB included a section that collected demographic details (see table 14).

Table 14. The demographic details collected by the LDSB

Age	Gender- male or female	Marital status- Married/living with partner, separated/divorced, single, other
Occupation of spouse/partner- Employed full-time, employed part-time, full time home manager, unemployed, other	Number of children	Ages of children
Number of children still living at home	Highest level of education attained- Leaving Cert, 3rd level Cert; 3rd level Diploma Degree, Postgrad, Other	Current course being undertaken
Occupation	Occupational sector- Private (for profit), private (not for profit), state, semi-state, other public (e.g. education, hospitals), self-employed, other	Management grade- yes or no
Length of employment prior to university	Contact details	

9.6.5. The Pilot Study

Through piloting the LDSB and the semi-structured interview with three individuals it was found that, with some minor editing, data relating to the individual's constructions of their identity and their engagement in identity-creation

and identity-management processes could be effectively gathered. The LDSB was found to effectively gather data regarding the background information required about the perceived structure of the participants' lives and also that it provided a good basis for the conduction of the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured schedule was also found, in this pilot study, to be effective in the gathering of appropriate data relating to participant constructions of their identity, and their engagement in processes of identity-creation and identity-management.

9.6.6. Identifying the Population and Selecting the Sample

Several populations were examined in terms of assessing the viability of selecting a sample within those populations. These included entrants in work organisations, for example accountancy firms or hospitals, entrants to the Irish Military or Police Force, entrants to third level educational institutions and individuals transitioning into retirement. Issues such as accessibility, suitability and ethical considerations along with time and resource constraints were taken into account in these assessments. The decision was made to select a sample from a population of mature students from Irish Third Level Educational Institutions. The existing literature focusing on mature students, older students, non-traditional students, or adult learners is extensive. The majority of this literature focuses on issues such as mature student study skills (Dawson, 2004), their perspectives and/or expectations of higher education (Simmons, 2007; Strage, 2008), their anxieties/sources of stress and how they deal with them (Keith, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Vaez and Laflamme, 2008), their engagement with technology (Zembylas, 2008) and their prospects in the labour force upon graduating (Purcell, Wilton and Elias, 2007). However, there are a minority of sources within the literature on mature students/adult learners that is specifically

focused on identity-related issues, for example Wojecki's (2007) article on adult learner identities in the workplace or Oplatka and Tevel's (2006) and Palazesi and Bower's (2006) papers regarding how returning to higher education affects individual identity. Cote (1996) refers to university as a prime testing ground for an identity-related concept. The current research study also examines how individual identity is affected by returning to higher education, and goes further than existing research in its examination of the identity-related processes involved in returning to education. The decision to select a sample from a population of mature students was also made on the basis that these individuals would have already established lives into which they would have to include, or in some cases re-introduce, the university context and that this would provide a situation where rich data relating to the issues under examination could potentially be gathered. The time and resource constraints of the current research study were also considered in the decision making process. A mature student population was more accessible and manageable than a population in an occupational setting. The mature students enter the organisation in one wave, do not have to answer to immediate supervisors with regard to time management, and have more free time than the typical employee in which to take part in the study.

The sample was selected by making contact with mature student officers in several Irish Third Level Educational Institutions in order to explore the possibility of conducting part of the study in these institutions. With the help of the mature student officers in two Irish Universities a list of potential participants was produced and both the researcher and the mature student officers were involved in initially contacting the potential participants by phone. As a result of this initial contact sufficient numbers of participants were recruited, although a small number of participants were added after this as they heard about the study by word of mouth from other mature students.

The population is therefore comprised of first year mature students within two Irish Universities. The sample initially comprised of thirty-seven participants but three participants dropped out of the study leaving thirty-four participants from a range of different first year courses (see table 15). This number is larger than many data-led qualitative studies which have a defined number of participants, for example Oplatka and Tevel's (2006) study had seventeen participants and Palazesi and Bower's (2006) study had twenty-two. However, the researcher wished to ensure an appropriately high number of participants to counter the possibility of a high dropout rate and to facilitate the collection of a sufficient amount of in-depth qualitative data. During the first phase of data collection, in the current research study, analytic saturation point was reached with the data collected from the thirty-four participants, indicating that the number of participants was appropriate. There were twenty-six participants from university one and eight participants from university two. There were sixteen male participants and eighteen female. Their ages ranged from twenty-three, which is the minimum age one has to be to qualify as a mature student in the Irish Education System, to seventy-four, with the average age of the participants being in the mid thirties. Fifteen of the participants had children, eleven of these participants still had children living at home and six of these participants had children aged ten or younger. The participants came from a range of occupational backgrounds; however fourteen of the participants defined their previous occupation as being in the private (for profit) sector. All but three of the participants had completed second level education or higher.

Table 15. Participant Demographics

Participant Demographics:			
N= 34 (University 1= 26 University 2=8)			
Age range= 23-74			
Average age= 34.6			
Male= 16		Female= 18	
Children= 15		No children= 19	
Children at home= 11		Children under 10= 6	
Previous Occupation:		*Highest level of education attained:*	
Private(for profit)	14	Less than 2nd Level	3
Private (not for profit)	2	2nd Level	13
State	3	3rd Level Cert	5
Semi-State	5	3rd Level Diploma	9
Other public	7	3rd Level Degree	2
Unemployed	2	Other	2
Fulltime Homemaker	3		
(Management Grade)	2		

9.7. The Study

This subsection of the methodology will describe how the current, longitudinal research study was carried out in order to collect, prepare and analysis participant data (see figure 51). Figure 51 highlights the temporal ordering of the various stages of the current research study. The researcher first formulated the research question, as informed by the researcher's research interests and the existing literature. Possible

9.3. Philosophical Approaches to Research in the Social Sciences

9.4. Analytic Approach – Discourse Analysis and Discursive Psychology

9.5. Data Collection Methods

9.6. Instruments for Data Collection

9.7. The Study

9.8. Evaluating the Quality of the Research Results

9.9. Ethical Considerations

9.10. Summary
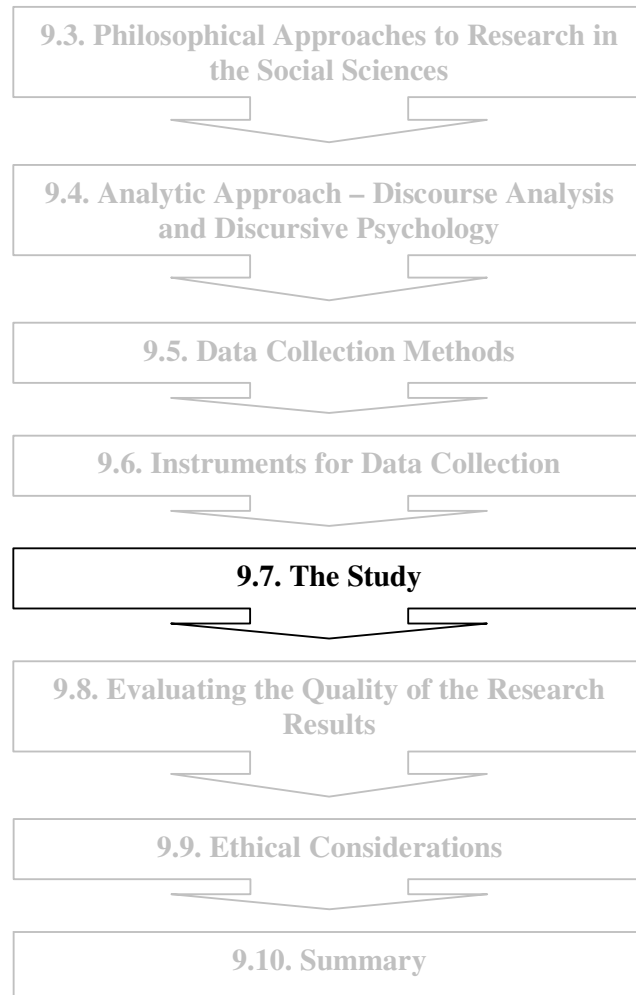
Figure 51. The structure of chapter nine: 9.7. The study

methodologies were then reviewed and a data-led qualitative methodology ultimately chosen. After examining the different ways in which the methodology could be operationalised the decision was made to utilise a multiple method design for data collection, using a small quantitative booklet along with the dominant part of the methodology, qualitative semi-structured interviewing. At this point the methodology and methods were reviewed and revised in order that they were of sufficient quality to test in a pilot study. Following favourable results from the pilot study, the first phase of data collection was carried out in September and October 2004. Initially

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│   Formulation of Research   │
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│ Review possible Methodologies│
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│    Review possibilities for │
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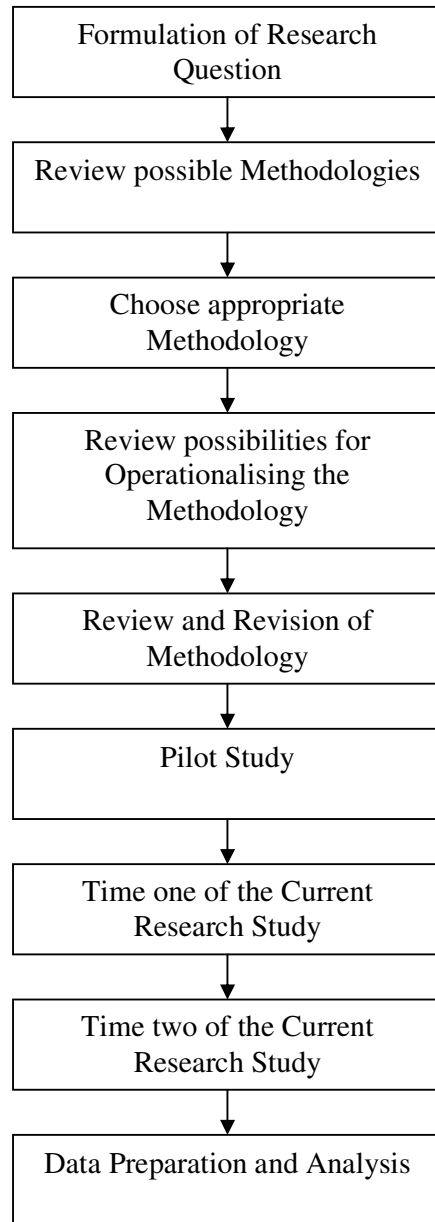
Figure 52. Temporal ordering of the various stages of the current research study

participants were given the LDSB to complete. The LDSB elicited information regarding the participants' lives while the participants were still getting to grips with the new context. The data from a participant's completed LDSB acted as a springboard for the discussion/exploration, in their follow up semi-structured

interviews of the participant constructions, for example "Why are the different parts of your life ordered in this way, in terms of their importance to you?".

Based on the data collected from the LDSBs and semi-structured interviews during the first phase of data collection (time one), a follow up interview schedule was designed (see appendix 3) and conducted with the participants during the second phase (time two) of data collection, seven months later, in April 2005. This aided in the exploration of identity-creation and identity-management processes through an examination of how the participant's new identity, formed for the new context in their lives, had developed between time one and time two. Following time two of the current research study the data was prepared and analysed, as will be discussed below.

9.7.1. Interview Data Preparation

Once the data had been collected the process of preparing the data for analysis began. This was not only a practical necessity but part of the process by which the researcher became familiar with the collected data. The organisation and preparation of the data, especially the transcription of the semi-structured interviews from time one and time two, was a difficult and time consuming task that took several months to complete. Even though a minimum of coding for timing and intonation was utilised in the transcription (see appendix 4), as a detailed noting of such was not critical to the desired analysis (Taylor, 2001) and would have added greatly to the time it took to complete transcription, it took an average of one hour to transcribe eight minutes of interview. However, when this task was completed the project had a clear representation of the interviews from which to code and analyse the data. Although the researcher had personally collected the research data and engaged in its preparation it was still necessary for the researcher to further read and reread the

interview transcripts in order to be as immersed in the data as possible. This is necessary for a researcher to achieve an adequately in-depth familiarity with the data in order to be able to carry out a satisfactory analysis of that data.

9.7.2. Coding the Interview Data

The transcribed data was then coded. Coding must be seen as a distinct activity from analysing the data. The aim of this activity is not to locate results but to produce a preliminary preparation of the data by dividing the large body of discourse gathered during basic collection into manageable chunks or categories (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Taylor, 2001). Initially a small number of printed transcripts were read and re-read in order to firstly identify patterns of language used within the data that are meaningful to the assessment of the research question and interesting to the researcher. Where these patterns or examples of certain language use were identified they were noted on the right hand margin of the page by using only words that appeared in the transcript so as not to interject the researcher's own interpretation of the data at this stage. When this had been done several times the transcript was read again, this time focusing not only on the transcript but on the previously noted patterns or examples of certain language use. Where these were identified they were given representational category names on the left-hand margin of a page, for example 'family-conflict' or 'college-anxiety'. When this had been done several times the category names from the left-hand side of the transcript margins were written down on one page and then grouped together into larger categories according to their commonality, for example 'family-conflict' and 'family-support' would be placed under a larger category of family. The researcher then repeated this process, on printed transcripts, with two other interview transcripts. This produced an initial

categorical system, based on the first three interview transcripts. This categorical system organises the codes such that any conceptual relationship within a group of codes is shown, as is any distinctiveness between the groups of codes, for example within and between groups of codes relating to a 'family' context and a 'work' context. This categorical system was then used as a starting point from which to examine the rest of the data. An important aspect of this task is that the interview data is 'divided up' into the different parts of the categorical system that has been produced, for example where a section of the text refers to a participant's discussion of feeling anxious in a family context, this data would be coded to the 'family-anxious' code. In this way the parts of the categorical system can be seen as containers that are filled up with relevant portions of the data. Some categories were influenced by the questions asked by the researcher, while others emerged purely from the participants. With the aid of NVivo 2.0 software (see appendix 5) the rest of the transcripts were coded. Where novel patterns or examples of certain language use were identified they were incorporated into the existing categorical system and retrospectively applied to those transcripts already coded.

Once the data had been coded a review of the categorical system commenced. Some parts of the categorical system were found to not be useful in that there was not enough data coding to that code. In such cases these codes were either subsumed into another code, where appropriate, or cut from the categorical system. Other codes contained data that was too diverse to be adequately explained by one code heading and therefore these codes were broken down into further codes, existing within an appropriate structure. Other codes were found to be too similar to one another for a meaningful distinction to be made between them. These codes were merged or collapsed in on one another. This review process ensured that the process of analysis

that was to be carried out on this data would be done within the context of a coherent categorical system that adequately captured the contours of the coded data. In line with Patton's (1990) dual criteria for judging categories the data within any group of codes in the categorical system cohered together meaningfully, and there were clear and identifiable distinctions between the different groups of codes that existed within the categorical system.

9.7.3. Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using a methodological framework involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. The methodological framework of the current research study utilised a basic quantitative method to analyse and present those results produced from the LDSB. In the analysis of the qualitative interviews the current research study utilised a discourse analytic/discursive psychology method, as an appropriate method of analysis. (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Wetherell et al, 2001a).

9.7.3.1. Analysis of LDBS Results

The LDBS gathered basic information regarding the way in which a participant perceived their life as being divided into different contexts, the relative importance of each of these perceived contexts and participant satisfaction with each perceived context on a scale of one to ten. Also, through the utilisation of an exercise based on a self-concept based motivation metatheory (Barbuto and Scholl, 1998; Leonard et al, 1999), information was gathered regarding what was important to a participant within the various perceived contexts. The perceived contexts, for example

'family' or 'work', were organised by categorical classification in order to make them easier to analyse and present. Numeric scores for the satisfaction scores, orders of importance and motivational sources were organised into tables for analysis and presentation (this is further explained in the results section). Those parts of the LDSB where the participants gave short descriptions of the perceived contexts that existed in their lives, or where the participants gave short explanations of how satisfied they were with their life overall were analysed using discourse analysis, along with the interview transcripts.

9.7.4. Analysis of the Interview Data: Discourse Analysis/Discursive Psychology

There is no single, accepted analytic method or mechanical procedure for the production of findings in discourse analysis/discursive psychology, like there is elsewhere in psychology. Within discourse analysis/discursive psychology there is a broad theoretical framework from which one can work (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Analysis here is viewed as being a craft skill (Potter, 2003), built up through reading existing literature about the production of discourse analysis, examining other discourse analytic research, and through previous experience of doing discourse analysis/discursive psychology. The quality of one's analysis improves with practice (Potter, 2003).

Throughout the current research study's analysis of the interview data there was a focus on the identification of patterns, whether this was in terms of differences or shared features of participant accounts, and an examination of the function and consequence of the participants' discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In that discourse analysis/discursive psychology combines components of hypothetico-deductivism and inductivism (Potter, 1997), the examination of the function and

consequences of the participants' discourse involved the forming of hypotheses about these functions, and the search for "linguistic evidence" to support these hypotheses (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 168). There was a search for and a focus on deviant cases, as such cases are analytically rich and provide a contrast to identified patterns and highlight where potential hypotheses have broken down or are inaccurate to the data (Potter, 1997).

In the current research study the data was analysed by examining the data sets that exist at each code within the categorical system. Analytic points were constructed that would adequately explain the data within each data set. For each analytic point constructed an illustrative quote was chosen from the data set that would represent the data that produced the analytic point. This process was carried out within the structure of the pre-existing categorical system and what was produced through this process can be seen in the interview data results presented in chapters eleven through fourteen. Analytic saturation point was reached within the data collected from the thirty-four participants.

9.8. Evaluating the Quality of the Research Results

The means by which the quality of the research results were evaluated will now be discussed (see figure 53). There are several options that could have been chosen in the current research study in order to show that the research results produced are of good quality. Classical criteria such as validity and reliability could have been applied to the research results, or reformulated for assessing data-led qualitative research results (Flick, 2006). This option was not suitable as the ontological and epistemological assumptions made by the current research study are

Figure 53. The structure of chapter nine: 9.8. Evaluating the quality of the research results

such that the existence of a singular, objective reality, against which to 'benchmark' the validity or reliability of the research results, is not accepted, indeed the existence of such a reality is refuted. Alternative criteria, specifically tailored for assessing qualitative research results, could have been employed or developed, for example employing 'trustworthiness' or 'dependability' as criteria for judging the quality of the work (Flick, 2006). This option was also deemed to not be suitable for judging the quality of the work. In this case the 'benchmark' for assessing the research is merely

being moved from the concept of an objective reality to an abstract concept of 'trustworthiness' or 'dependability', which are difficult to operationalise for assessment purposes. It would also be difficult to justify a reliance on any external criteria for the assessment of the quality of the research results, due to the ontological and epistemological assumptions held by the current research study. Another option available to a researcher operating from a data-led paradigm is to simply state that any traditional ideals of quality assessment simply do not apply to data-led research results and hence there is no need to present such a justification of the quality of the research results. While a theoretical argument can be made that this is the case, this stance would not be a useful or practical one to take. In order for a researcher to be able to assess his or her own work, and for others to be able to assess its quality, for practical purposes, steps must be taken by a researcher to ensure that the research results produced in their study are of high quality. The steps that are taken must be accessible to others for assessment purposes. If this cannot be done using traditional approaches to quality assessment, then others must be utilised. Therefore, in the current research study, a number of steps were taken throughout the research process, the aim of which was to ensure that the research results produced would be of high quality. The presentation of these various steps below are not designed to be a guarantee of quality rather they are a means of opening up the research analysis to a degree of public quality control (Potter, 2003).

9.8.1. Appropriateness of Method: Utilising the Metaphor of Indication

An essential feature of data-led research is that a researcher should choose a specific research method due to its appropriateness for the research study that is to be carried out. This focus on the appropriateness of method involves the employment of

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a metaphor of indication from the areas of medicine and psychotherapy, which is to say that a specific treatment or solution should be chosen in terms of its appropriateness for dealing with the specific problem under examination. This relocates the issue of quality away from simply being an assessment of research results and onto the level of research planning and quality management and process evaluation.

From the beginning of the current research study there was a focus on ensuring that research results of high quality would be produced. There is purposeful coherence, in the current research study, between the methodological framework, the paradigm that informed the methodological framework and the methods utilised for data collection. The methods utilised are appropriate for a study exploring individual construction, through language, of identity and engagement in identity-creation and identity-management processes. Coherence exists between the methodological framework of the current research study, the research question that gave focus to the research study and the individuals who participated in the research study.

A particular reader's evaluation of this coherence will depend on their individual assessment of the current research study, as presented in this thesis (see the *coherence* section below).

9.8.2. Participants' Orientation

Another essential feature of data-led research is that it is the subjective perspectives of the research participants that are the focus of the research (Flick, 2006). There is such a focus within the current research study. The principal of focusing on participant orientation as a means of assuring the quality of data-led research results is analytically powerful, but not foolproof (Potter, 2003). It focuses on

the importance of the orientation of the participant, and also that of the interviewer, in terms of the turn-by-turn nature of interaction between the interviewer and the participant. The focus must be on distinctions made by the participants in their descriptions and/or in their interactions with the interviewer rather than on any abstract notion of meaning that could be imposed on what is said. For example if, in an analysis of a piece of data, a researcher states that an interviewer, through a line of questioning with a participant, is making an accusation one would have to look to how the participant is responding to this 'accusation'. Specifically, is the participant's orientation commensurate with what would be expected in a person responding to an accusation? If the participant's response if such that it is clear that they are responding to an accusation in some way, then this interpretation is supported. However, if it is unclear that the participant is responding to an accusation, for example if the participant is responding to the interviewer in a manner that is consistent with their answering of non-accusatory questioning from the interviewer, then the finding that an accusation is being made must be viewed with suspicion (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 2003).

9.8.3. Intercoder check

An intercoder check was carried out early on in the formation of the coding list used to analyse the participants' data. Another social science researcher, trained in the discourse analytic/discursive psychology method, coded a sample section of participant data and the codes produced were compared with those produced by the researcher in the current study. Not withstanding superficial differences in the choice of words used to label the codes, there was an extremely high level of overlap between the two coding lists. In a small number of cases, where there was not an

overlap between the codes, the researchers discussed those cases and questioned their understanding of the codes origins until these codes were accommodated in the coding list to the satisfaction of both researchers. This list was then used to reanalyse already coded data and analyse the remaining data. This intercoder check was extremely useful in exposing any individual biases or misunderstandings that might have arisen if this type of check was not carried out.

9.8.4. Illustrative quotes

Research results originating from the interview-data are presented using illustrative quotations that are interwoven with the analytic points being made. The results are presented in this format in order to place a reader of the results section as close as possible to the analytic process, allowing that reader to not only read the analytic points that have emerged from the study but to read portions of the raw data that are representative of the data-set that produced the analytic point.

9.8.5. Confirmation through Exception or Deviant cases: Analytic Induction

Deviant cases can be more informative, both analytically and theoretically, than those cases within hypothesized explanatory frameworks (Flick, 2006; Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter, 2003). When an exception to the explanatory framework, (which has been produced as a result of the "regular pattern of accounting" that has been uncovered [Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 170]), is found this presents an important problem. If the exception or deviant case has no special features that mark the exception apart from the examples within the explanatory framework, then the accuracy or usefulness of the framework must be questioned. However, if the

exception or deviant case has features that set it apart from the examples found within the explanatory framework then this may strengthen, rather than weaken, that framework. Rather than highlighting that this pattern or explanatory framework is not normative, the exception highlights or confirms the normative nature of the framework by showing what it is not (Flick, 2006; Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter, 2003).

Within the current research study any deviant cases or exceptions that were uncovered were treated in the manner discussed above, and were allowed to highlight the majority views presented in the explanatory framework that can be seen the research results.

9.8.6. Coherence

A set of analytic claims made regarding a certain body of discourse should give coherence to that body of discourse, in that a reader should be able to see how the discourse "fits together" and how the discursive structure described "produces effects and functions" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 170). In this way the claims of the analysis are made accountable to the detail of the empirical results (Potter, 2003). The ideal here would be to place the reader as close as possible to the position held by the researcher with respect to the data (Sacks, 1992, cited in Potter, 2003). If the reader perceives there to be 'loose ends' or a disconnect between the explanation of the data and features of the discourse/data then the reader will be "less likely to regard the analysis as complete and trustworthy" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 170).

Coherence can also be seen as being the extent to which the research results are in coherence with the accumulation of findings from previous studies. If the results differ greatly from earlier work in the same area then that work must be treated

with more caution. However, if this is the case but the findings are found to be robust in other ways then the research work may be viewed as valid in spite of its discordance with the findings of previous studies (Potter, 2003).

As is stated above, a particular reader's evaluation of this coherence will depend on their individual assessment of the current research study, as presented in this thesis. However, steps were taken throughout the research process to ensure, as much as is possible, that there would be coherence between the data and the analytic claims being made about that data. These steps included: reflection on the research process on the part of the researcher; frequent meetings with a doctoral supervisor who reviewed the quality of the developing thesis; formal six month reviews within Dublin City University Business School which regularly provided valuable feedback on the progress of the research study; and informal proof reading by family and friends, some of whom are inexpert in the topic areas while others are experienced academics who are knowledgeable about the topics under study.

9.8.7. Generalisation/Transferability

The current research study does not hold the generalisation of the research results produced as an aim in the same way as would a traditional, theory-led, quantitative research study. An attempt to do so would conflict with the context-specific nature of the current research study. However, some more or less general statements are made in the discussion regarding the psychological processes examined in the current research study. The quality of the current research study can be assessed by examining the steps taken to arrive at these general statements (Flick, 2006). Any general statements made in the discussion chapter should be viewed, not in terms of an attempt to generalise results per se, but in terms of an attempt to establish the

'transferability' of the research findings to other contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Flick 2006).

The process of generalisation begins during the systematically circular data preparation and data analysis processes. The individual interviews provide the initial codes, which then produce the initial categories. These categories are built up into a categorical system, which is a product of a process of generalisation as it represents categories that have been found across the individual interviews. The analytic points made within the results, and discussed further within the discussion chapter, are then produced through a reading of data coded at the different parts of the categorical system. Therefore the results produced much be viewed as emerging both from the concrete contexts where the data was gathered (as the results are grounded in the participants data), and the generalisation process where the individual case studies are analysed using a categorical system that represents the patterns of language use that were found to exist across those individual case studies (Flick, 2006). In terms of the transferability claims being made within the current research study, it would be expected that the findings of this study would be transferable to other mature students or adult students in other Irish Third Level Institutions. The research findings are also seen as being transferable to other adults, in a similar sociocultural and sociohistorical context, in circumstances where they have to enter a new organisational context and create a new context-specific-identity, while managing their existing identity-portfolio.

9.8.8. Summary

Through the various quality management processes discussed above the current research study seeks to provide the greatest degree of public quality control (Potter, 2003) possible for a research study of this type.

9.9. Ethical considerations

The methodology will now present the ethical considerations taken into account in the current research study (see figure 54). The design of the current research study was created using current best practice ethical guidelines from Dublin City University, the Psychological Association of Ireland, the British Psychological Society and the American Psychological Association. In terms of the integrity of the study there was, at all times, an observance of accepted norms of honesty and integrity underlying the decisions and actions related to the research study. There were no conflicts of interest inherent in the research that was carried out.

Within the current research study there was an undertaking to ensure that the ethical precepts of beneficence and nonmaleficence were upheld. Semi-structured interviews allowed the research to explore how participants are embedded in a larger social and cultural context as well as how, in turn, they are active participants in shaping the worlds they inhabit. However, the project remains aware that this type of interviewing makes "discrete but demanding forays into the lives of strangers" (May, 2002, pp.210). Unlike therapy, for example, the aim here is not necessarily to help the participant (May, 2002, pp210), and the researcher remained sensitive to this fact. There is also an aim to remain sensitive to the fact that asking the participants to self-reflect on their lives may adversely affect their lives and/or their interactions with others in their lives. The researcher ensured that details of local

Figure 54. The structure of chapter nine: 9.9. Ethical considerations

counsellors/psychotherapists were kept to hand in case any participant reported being negatively affected by the data collection process.

Participants were properly briefed and debriefed before, during and after the data collection processes as to insure that the participant's informed consent could be obtained. The consent obtained was voluntary and obtained without duress, undue influence, or financial inducements. A description of the research study as a study of the lives, experiences and perceptions of mature students was conveyed to the participants at the first meeting between the participants and the researcher. After

participants had completed their second interview a more detailed description of the research study was provided to the participants, including the psychological theories underlying the research. Assurances of confidentiality given to participants were realistic and realised. These assurances were provided in written form at the start of the LDSB and orally at the beginning of the research interviews. Participants were made aware that, if they wished, they did not have to participate in all or part of the study. The participants were advised that they could opt out of the research study even after their participation and each participant had the researcher's contact details in order that this would be possible. The participant's personal details and data were coded and their personal details and data were then held separate with only the researcher having access to the code that connected the two. The data are held securely by the researcher.

9.10. Summary

This chapter has presented the methodological framework employed by the current research study. The current research study was informed by a data-led paradigm in terms of its ontological and epistemological assumptions. A multi-method design was employed in the current study, with a short quantitative survey supporting the semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with the participants. The participants were thirty-four first year mature students from two Irish Third Level institutions. The data collected was analysed using the discourse analysis/discursive psychology method of analysis. Steps were taken throughout the current research study to ensure that work of a high level of quality was being produced and that the production of this work was ethical.

In Section B, which is made up of chapters ten to fourteen, the results produced through the analytic processes described above will be presented.

Section B

10. Introduction to Section B

10.1. The Structure of Section B
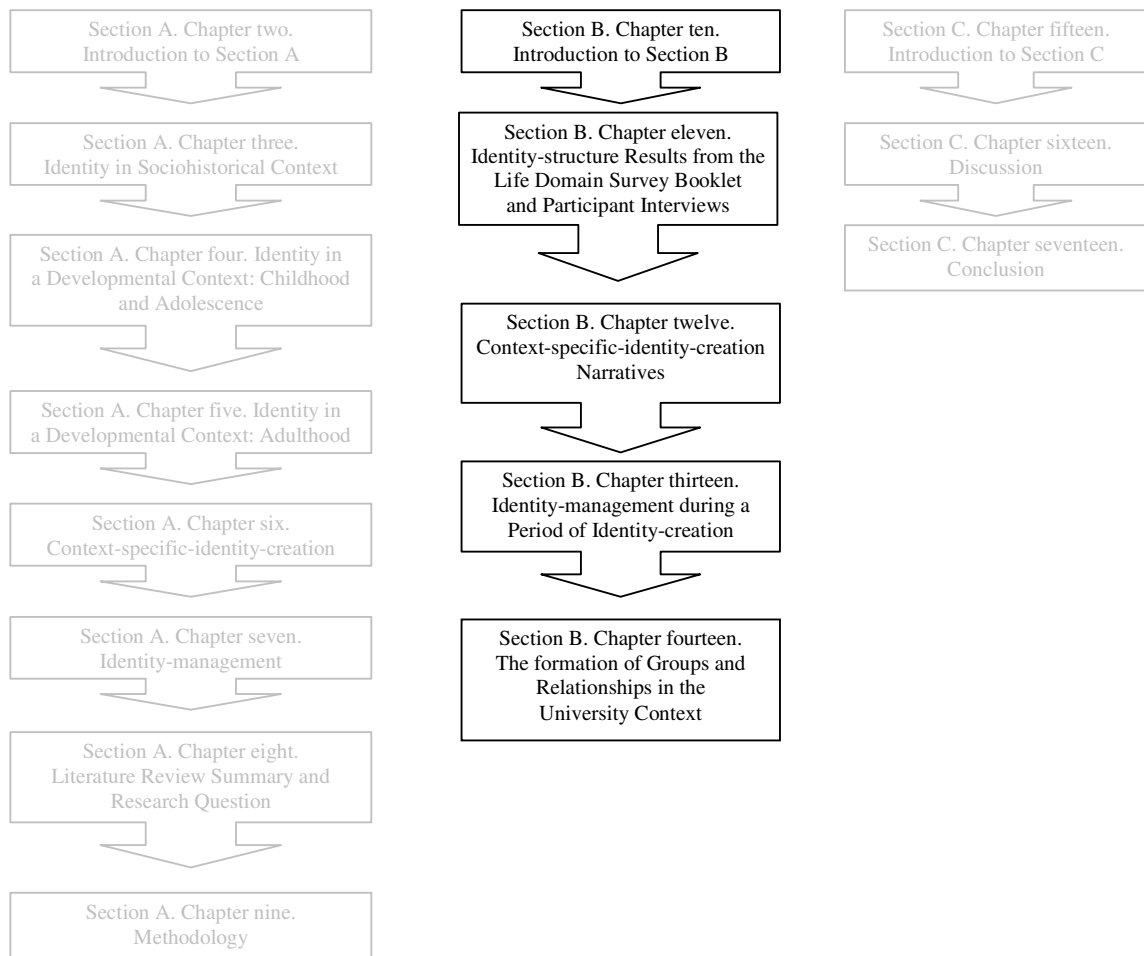
Figure 55. The structure of section B in relation to the overall thesis structure

Section B, made up of chapters ten to fourteen, present the results that emerged from the analysis carried out on the data collected from the thirty-four participants at time one and time two of the current research study (see figure 55).

11. The Structure of the Identity-portfolio:
Results from the Life Domain Study
Booklet and Participant Interviews

12. Context-specific-identity-creation
Narratives

13. Identity-management during a
Period of Identity-creation

14. The Formation of Groups and
Relationships in the University Context
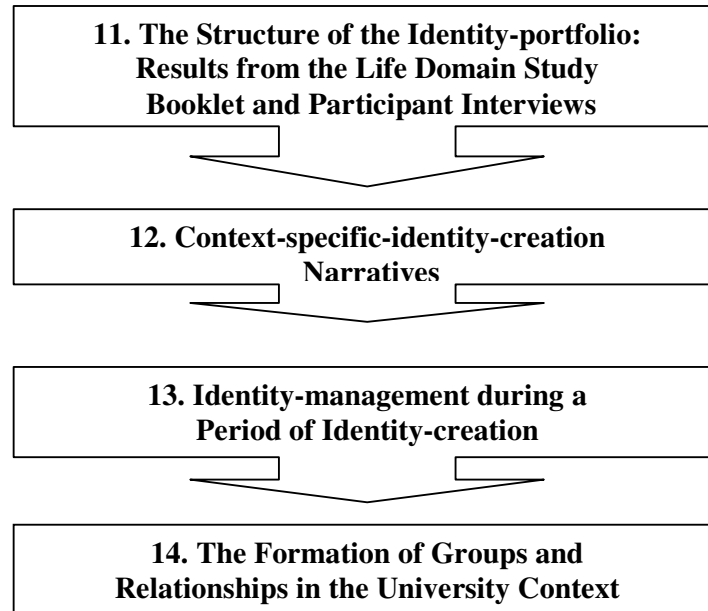
Figure 56. The structure of section B

Chapter eleven (see figure 56) presents the analysis relating to the structure of

the participants' perceived identity-portfolios, and related issues, which emerged from

the life domain study booklet (LDSB) data and the participants' interviews. It

examines the various context-specific and non-context-specific elements the

participants perceived as existing in their lives and how the participants perceive

them, for example in terms of their salience to the participant. Chapter eleven presents

findings relating to the general-identity, whether it is described in terms of the

context-specific-identity the participant feels represents them best 'as a person', or in

terms of a non-context-specific, general element to themselves that they can readily

engage with. Chapter eleven also presents findings relating to how the participants see

themselves as being, or how the participants would wish to be, in the future, that is to say relating to their possible future-identity-structures.

Chapter twelve explores the patterns that emerged from the data analysis related to processes of context-specific-identity-creation and the impact of this process on the participants' identity-portfolios. These patterns related to overarching identity-creation narratives produced by the participants, in the two semi-structured interviews. This chapter shows how, at time one of the research study, the participants typically constructed their narratives such that the narrative began in their past and was then brought up the present, in that it then described how the participants' perceived themselves at time one. At time two these narratives were reconstructed in order to include the seven month period between time one and time two, in order that participant narratives would accurately fit the participants' current self-perceptions.

Chapter thirteen focuses on the research results relating to participants' constructions of how they managed their identity-portfolio on a day-to-day basis, while being socialised into the university context and creating a new context-specific-identity. This chapter discusses those factors that facilitated the identity-management process, those factors that represented difficulties that impeded the participants' ability to engage in the identity-management process and also those strategies used by the participants to deal with such difficulties.

Chapter fourteen focuses on those research findings related to the co-creation of interpersonal relationships, groups and social networks by the participants and other context-members in the university context. These relationships are a focus of the research results as they were found to impact on the participants' engagement in both the processes of identity-creation and processes of identity-management. This chapter discusses the groups the participant's co-created with other context-members, with

whom the participant identified, and their interrelationships with context-members in those groups prescribed by the university context, for example the participants' classes and tutorial groups.

11. The Structure of the Identity-portfolio: Results from the Life Domain Study Booklet and Participant Interviews

11.1. The Position of Chapter Twelve within Section B
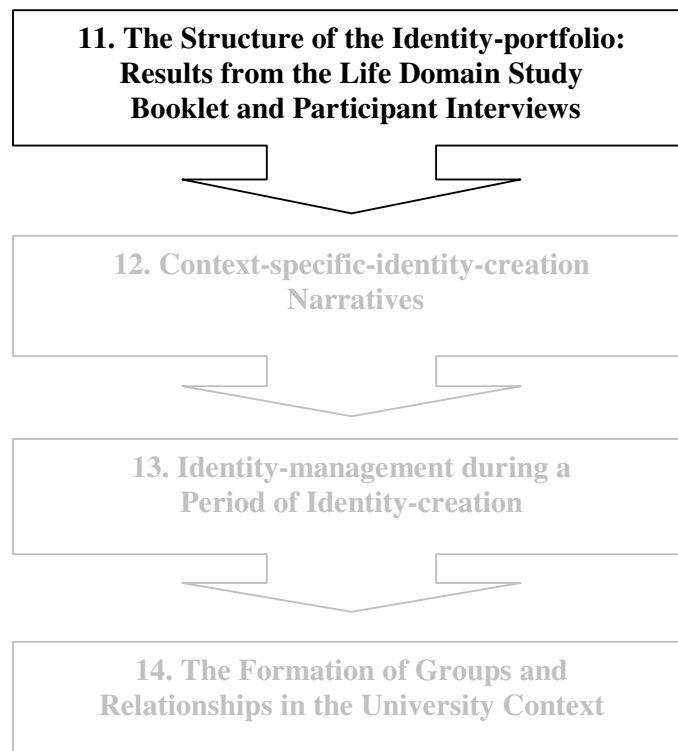
Figure 57. The structure of section B: Chapter eleven. The structure of the identity-portfolio

Chapter eleven (see figure 57) is the first chapter presenting research results that emerged from an analysis of participant data. This chapter presents results relating to how participant identities were structured, in relation to context-specific-identities, non-context-specific-identities (the general-identity) and future-identity-structures. Section B will then move onto present research findings relating to identity-creation narratives (chapter twelve), identity-management (chapter thirteen) and the influence of groups and relationships on these processes (chapter fourteen).

11.2. The Structure of Chapter Eleven

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│  11.3. Life Domain Study Booklet [LDSB]      │
│                  Results                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  11.4. The General-Identity: Perceiving a    │
│      Non-context-specific Part of Oneself    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  11.5. Possible Future-identity-structures   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              11.6. Summary                    │
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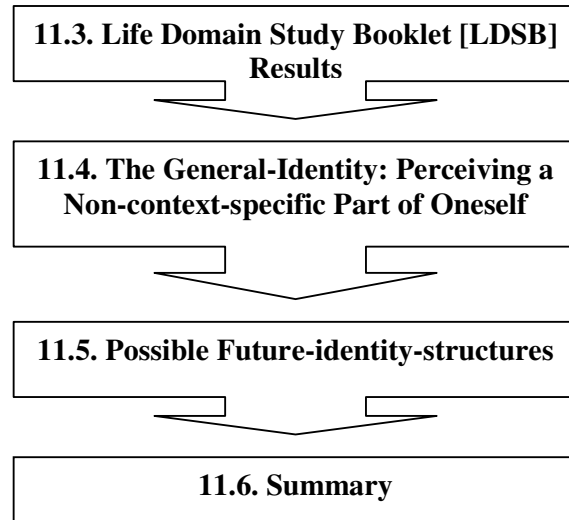
Figure 58. The structure of chapter eleven

This chapter presents the research results that emerged from the data relating to the participants' constructions of how their lives were structured, and hence the form of their identity-portfolios (see figure 58). The research findings presented in this chapter relate to the portion of the research question that focuses on how an individual's identity-structure may be described, specifically can it be described as being comprised of a non-context-specific-identity and a number of context-specific-identities? The results that emerged from the participants' life domain study booklets (LDSBs) are presented, along with supporting quotes from the analysis of participant interviews where appropriate. These LDSB findings show the contexts perceived by the participants as existing in their lives, the relative importance of these contexts to the participants, perceived satisfaction with each context and the dominant motivators for each perceived context. The chapter will then move to present portions of the

interview data analysis that relate to participant constructions of their general-identity and descriptions of their possible, future-identity-structures. This then provides a comprehensive view of the way in which the participants' constructed the structure of their lives, and hence their identity-portfolios. These results facilitate the analysis of data relating to processes of identity-creation and identity-management, which are presented in subsequent chapters.

11.3. Life Domain Study Booklet [LDSB] Results
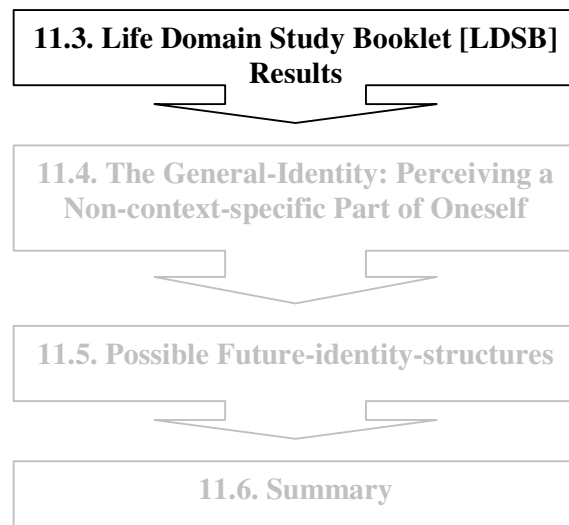
Figure 59. The structure of chapter eleven: 11.3. Life domain study booklet [LDSB] results

This subsection of chapter eleven presents data gathered by the LDSB, supported by quotes from the analysis of interview data where appropriate (see figure 59). The LDSB gathered background information about the perceived structure of the participants' lives, and therefore provided a basis for the conducting of the semi-structured interviews that followed. Due to the complexity of this subsection an

additional series of figures is utilised to make clear the structure of this subsection (see figure 60).

| 11.3.1. Perceived Contexts |
| 11.3.2. Relative Importance of Perceived Context Categories |
| 11.3.3. Participant Satisfaction with Perceived Context Categories |
| 11.3.4. Perceived Context Category Motivators |
| 11.3.5. LDSB Data Summary |
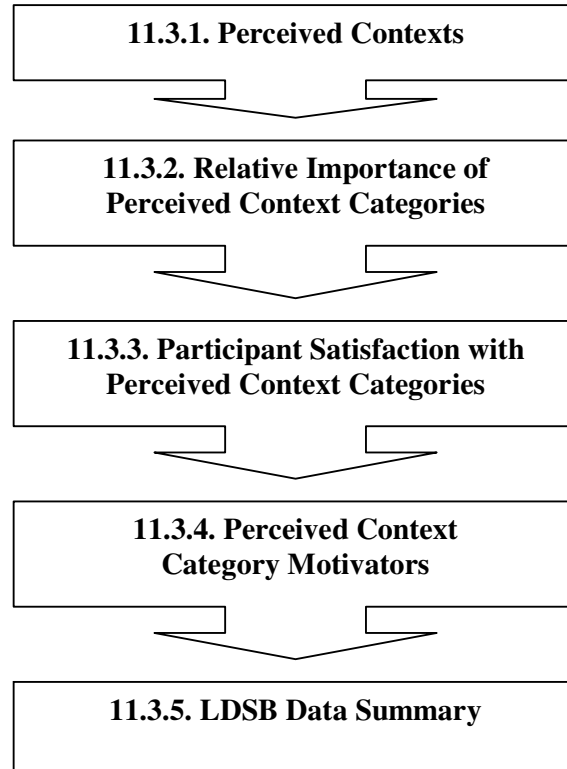
Figure 60. The structure of 11.3. life domain study booklet [LDSB] results

The LDBS gathered information (see figure 60) regarding the participants' perceptions of the different contexts that existed in their lives at the time of the research study. It aided in the examination of participant perceptions of how they saw their lives as being structured, in terms of the context-specific and non-context-specific elements that make up that structure. The LDSB aided in the collection of information regarding how important each perceived context was to the participant, in comparison with the others they perceived as existing in their life, and in the collection of information regarding participant's perceived satisfaction with these

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contexts. Finally the LDSB collected data regarding participants motivation within these contexts, in terms of the motivational sources proposed by a self-concept based motivation metatheory (intrinsic, extrinsic, goal internalisation, external self-concept and internal self-concept) (Barbuto and Scholl, 1998; Leonard et al, 1999).

The LDSB aided in data collection at time one and time two of the research study, in that a participant's LDSB details were updated during that participant's second interview. Any differences between the information given by a participant at time one and time two of the research study were noted and used as a basis for questioning in the participant's second semi-structured interview.

11.3.1. Perceived Contexts

11.3.1. Perceived Contexts

11.3.2. Relative Importance of Perceived Context Categories

11.3.3. Participant Satisfaction with Perceived Context Categories

11.3.4. Perceived Context Category Motivators

11.3.5. LDSB Data Summary
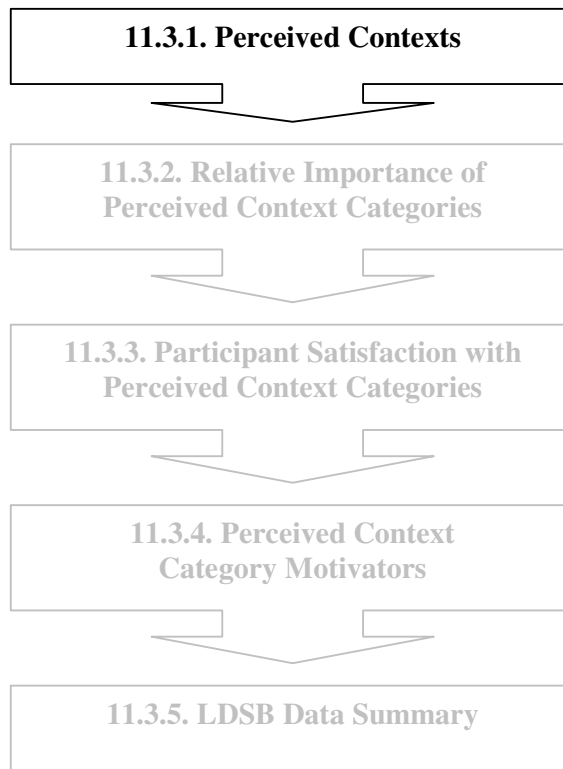
Figure 61. The structure of 11.3. Life Domain Study Booklet [LDSB] Results: 11.3.1. Perceived contexts

The LDSB required the participants to divide their life, as they perceived it, into different parts or sections, which will be referred to here as contexts (see figure 61). No restrictions or prompts were given to the participants in this task, therefore the contexts provided by the participants in their completion of the LDSB were freely given and of the participants own choosing.

The findings from the LDSB that follow are based on the in-depth review of the completed LDSBs of thirty-one participants. Three of the thirty-four participants' booklet results are excluded from the presented analysis of the LDSB due to their perception of their lives being divided up temporally, for example 'childhood', 'teenage years' etc., rather than by context, for example 'family', 'friends', 'career' etc. as did the majority of the participants. To include the three participant's data would have produced inconsistencies in relation to presenting participants' LDSB results together. However, this did not present a difficulty in terms of exploring these perceptions within the participants' subsequent interviews.

At time one, the thirty-one participants, through their completion of the LDSB, produced sixty-one perceived contexts, for example 'family' or 'friends' (see table 16).

At time two an additional five perceived contexts were reported by participants, that no participant had reported at time one. These contexts were: 'professional (part time job)'; 'personal art'; 'crafts council'; 'Limerick students'; and 'me'. Each of these contexts was perceived in only one instance at time two. In total sixty-eight contexts, including the general context, were perceived by the participants, between time one and time two.

Table 16. Results from the LDSB: Perceived contexts and the number of instances where that context was perceived, at time one

Family	27	Art/craft	1	Family1 (wife)	1
University or college	9	Quakers	1	Family2 (mother, father, etc.)	1
Social	11	Employment	2	Athletics	1
Money/employment	1	Home	5	General personal development	1
Pastimes	1	Social/partner	1	Hobbies	1
Interests	1	Degree	1	My family in Meath (mother)	1
Work	9	Health	1	My personal time	1
Education	7	Happiness	1	Teaching	1
Relaxation	1	Success	1	Relaxing/socialising	1
Relationship	3	Religion	3	Back to education (accepted)	1
Self-satisfaction	1	Work/college	1	Grandchildren	1
Friends	14	School	1	American Football	1
Professional/education	1	Environmental	1	Films	1
Finance	1	Travel	2	Money	2
Learning	2	Friends and Fun	1	Exercise at gym	1
Community friends	1	Voluntary work	1	Music	1
Creativity	1	Beliefs	1	Partner	1
My values	1	Fun	1	Spiritual life	1
Sports	2	Children	1	Reading/research	1
Study	4	Husband	2	College/study	1
Politics	1	Career	2	* General	18

* This is a score for a context labelled 'general', which was not put forward by the participants but was discussed during the interview. The 'general' label refers to whether the participant perceived and could articulate a general sense of themselves, beyond or apart from the context-specific parts of their lives.

11.3.1.1. Context Categories

In that there was great flexibility in the manner with which the participants were able to label the different contexts they perceived as existing in their life, a large number of these perceived contexts (sixty-eight) resulted. Many of these contexts

were similarly labelled, for example, 'university', 'college', and 'education'. As a result, a process of categorical classification was employed. The sixty-eight contexts were clustered into fourteen context categories (see table 17).

The 'family' context category contains contexts describing the family, other family members, for example children, or the participants' home lives with their family.

The 'university' context category contains contexts describing university, college, education etc.

The 'work' context category contains contexts describing full or part time work, or participants' careers.

The 'pastimes' context category contains contexts involving participants describing what they do in their spare time.

The 'abstracts' context category contains contexts, which participants described, which were less connected to a specific physical or temporal location but were more general and could exist across the other contexts in the participants' lives.

The 'community' context category contains contexts describing participants' involvement with their community or government.

The 'money' context category contains contexts to do with money or finance.

The 'friends' context category contains contexts describing the participants' friendships.

The 'personal time' context category contains contexts that refer to the participants' sense of having a part of their lives where they could be themselves, or could develop themselves. There is a conceptual link between this category and the global category, as both refer to participants' general sense of themselves.

The 'relationship' category contains contexts that describe the participants' partners or spouses.

The 'work/college' context category contains contexts that describe a situation where participants perceived the work and university contexts in their lives as being linked to such an extent that they could not be perceived as separate entities.

The 'social' context category contains contexts describing the participants' social lives.

The 'religion' context category contains contexts that describe participants' religious beliefs or activities.

The 'general' context category was discussed in the interview and was related to whether the participant perceived a part of themselves beyond or apart from the context-specific parts of their lives.

The number of instances where participants reported the various contexts at time one can be re-examined in the context of the fourteen context categories (see table 18). This process makes the presentation and discussion of the LDSB results more manageable.

As can be seen from table 18, due to the fact that one participant could report more than one context from a specific context category, for example one participant could report the contexts 'husband' 'children' and 'grandchildren' from the 'family' context category, it is possible for the number of instances where contexts related to a specific context category are reported to exceed the number of participants from whom the data is gathered. An example of this is the 'family' context category, where there are thirty-nine reported instances of participants reporting contexts from this context category, while there were only thirty-one participants' data involved. This is

due to some participants perceiving more than one context that was then included in the 'family' context category.

Table 18 reveals that the 'family' context category contains the most instances of reported contexts. At time one, there were thirty-nine contexts reported by participants that were placed in the 'family' category. The 'university' context category contains twenty-six reported contexts.

Table 17. Fourteen context categories containing the sixty-eight perceived contexts reported by thirty-one participants

Context Categories	Constituent Contexts								
1. Family	Family	Home	Children	Husband	Family1(wife)	Family2 (mom, dad, etc.)	My family in Meath	grandchildren	
2. University	University or college	Education	Learning	Study	Degree	School	Back to education	College/study	
3. Work	Work	Money/ employment	Professional (part time job	Limerick students	Employment	Career	Teaching		
4. Pastimes	Pastimes	Relaxation	Sports	Art/craft	Personal art	Travel	Athletics	Hobbies	American Football
	Films	Exercise at gym	Music	Reading/research	Interests				
5. Abstracts	Beliefs	Fun	Happiness	Health	Success	My values	Creativity		
6. Community	Politics	Crafts Council	Voluntary Work	Environmental	Community Friends				
7. Money	Money	Finance							
8. Friends	Friends	Friends and Fun							
9. Personal time	General personal Development	My Personal Time	Self-satisfaction	Me					
10. Relationship	Relationship	Partner							
11. Work/ College	Work/college	Professional/ Education							
12. Social	Social								
13. Religion	Religion								
14. General									

Table 18 also shows that there were eighteen instances of participants reporting a perception of a general context. These eighteen participants could readily perceive and articulate a general, non-context-specific sense of themselves, when this was discussed during a subsequent interview.

Other context categories that contained relatively high numbers of reported contexts were the pastimes context category (sixteen), the work context category (fifteen), the friends context category (fifteen) and the social context category (eleven).

Table 18. The number of instances contexts related to the fourteen context categories were reported by the thirty-one participants at time one, organised by context category

Context Category	Number of instances contexts related to the fourteen context categories were reported at time one
1. Family	39
2. University	26
3. Work	15
4. Pastimes	16
5. Abstracts	7
6. Community	4
7. Money	3
8. Friends	15
9. Personal time	3
10. Relationship	5
11. Work/ College	2
12. Social	11
13. Religion	5
14. General*	18

* This is a score for a context labelled 'general', which was not put forward by the participants but was discussed during the interview. The 'general' label refers to whether the participant perceived and could articulate a general sense of themselves, beyond or apart from the context-specific parts of their lives.

11.3.1.2. Instances of Reported Contexts at Time One having Changed at Time Two

At time two of the research study a number of participants reported that contexts they had described at time one had changed or transformed in some way. For example, the word a participant used to describe a context at time one was no longer used to describe that context at time two. However, this context had not been removed from the participant's description of how they perceived their life, rather the word(s) used to describe the context have been changed or transformed. A specific example of this was where a 'work/college' context, which was reported at time one, was split into a 'work' context and a 'college' context at time two.

At time two there were three instances of participants reporting that some of the contexts they described at time one had changed or transformed in the manner discussed above. There was one instance of a participant reporting that a context within the 'university' context category had changed, one instance of a context changing in the 'pastimes' category and one instance of a context in the 'work/college' category. The majority of the perceived contexts reported by the participants did not change between time one and time two of the research study.

11.3.1.3. Instances of Perceived Contexts, Reported at Time One, which were not Reported at Time Two

A context that was reported at time one but not reported at time two indicates that a participant reported that the context was no longer perceived as existing in their life, or that the context was no longer salient to the participant in any way that was significant.

At time two there was one instance of a participant reporting that a context within the 'work' category, which they reported at time one, was no longer present in their life at time two. The majority of the contexts reported at time one were also reported at time two of the current research study, which took place seven months after time one.

11.3.1.4. Instances of Contexts Reported at Time Two that were not Reported at Time One

Instances of contexts reported at time two that were not reported at time one arose in a number of ways. A context may be described by a participant as being completely new at time two, or the new context may have emerged from a context that has changed/transformed since time one.

At time two there were eight instances of participants perceiving new contexts in their lives that had not been described at time one. There were two instances of participants perceiving a new context within the 'university' context category at time two, three instances with regard to the 'work' category, and one instance each within the 'pastimes', 'personal time' and 'community' context categories.

11.3.1.5. Summary

In summary, the participants overall perceptions of their lives remained stable, with only a few changes, between time one and time two. However, as will be seen in the following sections, many participants perceived changes within the contexts they perceived as existing in their lives, in terms of their relative importance to the participant and the participants perceived satisfaction with those contexts.

11.3.2. Relative Importance of Perceived Context Categories
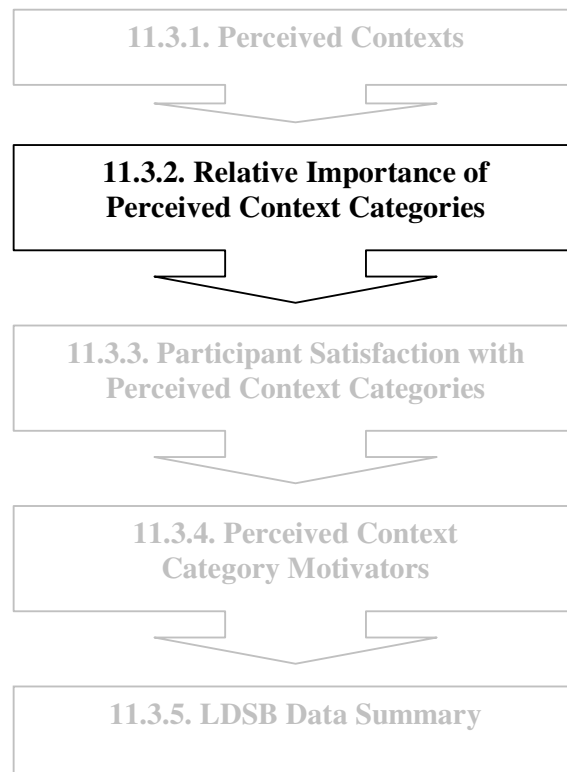
Figure 62. The structure of 11.3. life domain study booklet [LDSB] results: 11.3.2. Relative importance of perceived context categories

The LDSB gathered information regarding the relative importance of the participants perceived contexts (see figure 62). At time one and time two the participants placed their perceived contexts in an order of importance (this did not include the 'general' context as this was discussed in the interview). The breakdown of contexts, in terms of the context categories, for time one and time two, can be seen in table 19.

Table 19. Order of importance of perceived contexts presented in terms of the context categories

Context Categories (n=number of times participants reported contexts that make up this context category)	Order of importance (the numbers beneath represent the number of participants who placed contexts from a context category, at that time, at that level of the order of importance)							
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
Family (n=39) (time 1)	23	9	3	2	1			
Family (n=39) (time 2)	21	10	3	2	2			
University (n=26) (time 1)	3	4	8	7	2			
University (n=28) (time 2)	6	8	6	4	1			
Work (n=15) (time 1)	0	2	3	4	2			1
Work (n=17) (time 2)	0	1	3	5	2			1
Pastimes (n=16) (time 1)	0	2	3	3	5	1	1	
Pastimes (n=16) (time 2)	0	3	2	3	5	1	1	
Abstracts (n=7) (time 1)	1	1	1	1	3			
Abstracts (n=7) (time 2)	1	1	2	1	2			
Community (n=4) (time 1)	0	1	1	1	0			
Community (n=5) (time 2)	0	0	2	1	0			
Money (n=3) (time 1)	0	1	1	0	1			
Money (n=3) (time 2)	0	2	1	0	0			
Friends (n=15) (time 2)	0	8	3	4	0			
Friends (n=15) (time 2)	0	6	3	5	1			
Personal Time (n=3) (time 1)	1	0	0	1	1			
Personal Time (n=4) (time 2)	1	0	1	2	0			
Relationship (n=5) (time 1)	1	2	0	1	1			
Relationship (n=5) (time 2)	1	1	1	0	2			
Work/College (n=2) (time 1)	0	1	1	0	0			
Work/College (n=1) (time 2)	0	1	0	0	0			
Social (n=11) (time 1)	1	0	2	6	2			
Social (n=11) (time 2)	1	0	3	5	2			
Religion (n=5) (time 1)	1	0	2	0	1			
Religion (n=5) (time 2)	1	0	1	1	1			

From the array of data in table 19 the most noteworthy are:

In the 'family' context category, which contained the most instances of perceived contexts, there were twenty-three instances of participants providing an order of importance that placed a context from the 'family' category at the number one position in their order of importance. This dropped to twenty-one at time two. The importance of 'family' related contexts to many of the participants is clear in the following quotes from time one of the research study (In the illustrative quotes presented in this thesis *I:* denotes the interviewer and *P* followed by a number represents a particular participant, for example *P1:* denotes Participant 1. After each quote the participant will again be denoted by P and a number in brackets, for example *(P1)*. Where … is placed in the text of an illustrative quote this indicates that a portion of the text has been removed in order to make the quote more concise.)

> *"P1: like if you're not putting your family down as number one then you're in trouble really" (P1)*
>
> *"P14: well the family is, paramount like it's good to and I'm I thank god that they're alright" (P14)*
>
> *"P21: …the children being the most important and then my husband and family life they sort of come as that package but everything I do I consider my children, and then my husband and then my family*
> *I: yeah*
> *P21: because it's the family that I need to help with whatever I do*
> *I: (laugh)*
> *P21: but yeah they would be like, yeah I would eh yeah I would do very little without considering them" (P21)*

The most noticeable order of importance change, between time one and time two, was the number of times a 'university' context was placed by a participant in the number one and number two positions. This doubled between time one and time two, with three instances of a 'university' life part being placed in the number one position at

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time one, rising to six instances at time two, and four instances of a 'university' life

part being placed in the number two position at time one, rising to eight at time two.

This type of increase did not occur in any other context category:

Time one

> *"I: And then education is another part.*
> *P2: Yeah, that's what I'm doing now, it's the main part of my life at the*
> *moment, going back*
> *I: And that's taking over from the, office work*
> *P2: Exactly yeah, it is yeah, that's what I'm thinking about all the time,*
> *and what I'm kinda channelling all my energy into, you know, I*
> *suppose that is my work to a certain extent now, if you know what I*
> *mean" (P2)*

> *"P3: I'd say at the moment in my train of thinking or, I can genuinely*
> *say because I'm fairly focused in relation to I wouldn't say work but in*
> *terms of what I'm doing now*
> *I: mmm*
> *P3: being in the university studying for a degree*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: and that's that's the type of thing now that I'm looking at, and*
> *that's getting more of my attention than anything else because, some*
> *people might call that selfish and if it is fair enough but that's what I*
> *want*
> *I: yeah yeah*
> *P3: so everything else in a way are important factors in life kind of*
> *pales into a little bit of insignificance for the moment so" (P3)*

The above quotes show how, at time one, the participants were in the process of

bringing the university context into their life, and were in the process of placing the

university context somewhere within their order of importance.

Time two

> *"I: and if you had to put them in an order of importance for now what*
> *would that order be*
> *P24: college number one, family number two, work three friends four*
> *and hobbies five*
> *I: so that's pretty much the same as last time except that college is*
> *pushed up above family*
> *P24: (laugh) yeah I don't see them anyway so you know*
> *I: is that just in terms of how the year has gone*
> *P24: no it's just I don't really go home that much anymore like when I*
> *moved up first I used to go down every weekend it was like a religious*

thing I had to go down every weekend but I don't now I go down
maybe once every two months like I'd talk to them on the phone every
couple of days or whatever but it's like you make your own family and
friends up here isn't it so,
I: so that's a small change reflecting where you are now
P24: and I'm getting older you know you can't depend on your family
as much when you get older well I don't anyway" (P24)

The above quote reflects the trend discussed above, where participants perceived an increase in the subjective importance of the university context, in relation to the other contexts they perceived as existing in their life, and consequently they changed the way in which they organised their life.

The majority of the participants were readily able to place their perceived contexts in an order of importance, based on the perceived importance or salience of the context to the participant. However, there were a minority of cases where a participant could not, or did not wish to, separate two or more perceived contexts in order to rank one as being more important than the other, and so they were placed at the same level of importance. In the case of P8, all the perceived contexts in her life were described as equally important:

"P8: they are all of equal importance to me ok rather than none more
important than the other you know they are of equal importance but I
focus on different things at different times" (P8)

11.3.3. Participant Satisfaction with Perceived Context Categories

The LDSB also gathered data relating to participant satisfaction within each of the contexts they reported (see figure 63) (see table 20). Table 20 includes a score for the 'general' context category, which was obtained at time one in the LDSB by asking the participants to state how satisfied they are in their life overall on a scale of one to

ten, and at time two by asking the same question in the interview. In many cases this overall score was attained even from those participants who, in the interview, were not among the eighteen participants who were readily able to articulate a view of themselves outside of the specific contexts that existed in their lives.

This section presents the satisfaction scores that participants gave to their perceived life parts at time one and time two of the current research study.
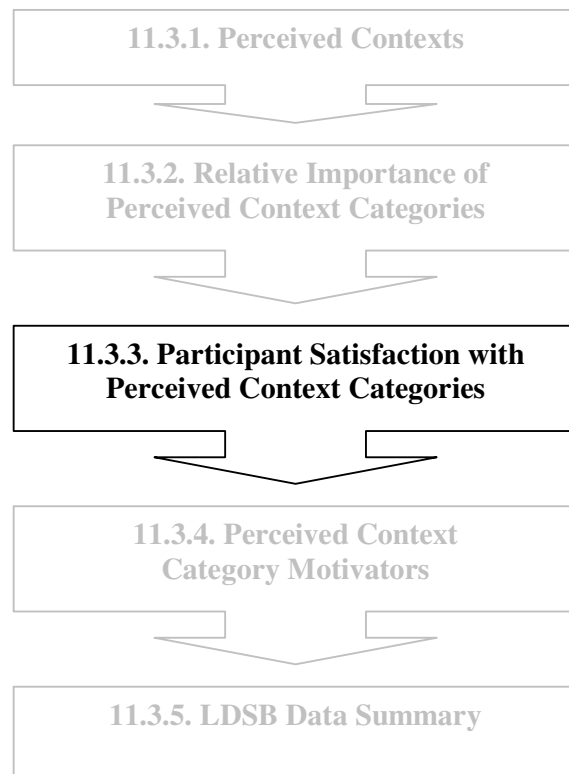
Figure 63. The structure of 11.3. life domain study booklet [LDSB] results: 11.3.3. Participant satisfaction with perceived context categories

While table 20 contains much data, the core findings that are viewed as noteworthy here are:

At time one, and time two, there were thirty-four instances of contexts that make up the 'family' context category being given a satisfaction score of seven or higher. The

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Table 20. Satisfaction Scores given to perceived contexts presented in terms of the context categories

Context Categories (n=number of times participants perceived this context category)	Satisfaction Score									
	10	**9**	**8**	**7**	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
	(the numbers below represent the number of times contexts related to a context category were given each satisfaction score, at time one and time two)									
Family (n=39) (time 1)	10	8	10	6	1	2	1	0	0	1
Family (n=39) (time 2)	11	5	9	9	0	2	1	1	0	1
University (n=26) (time 1)	3	3	7	2	4	4	1	1	0	0
University (n=28) (time 2)	2	4	8	6	1	3	1	0	2	0
Work (n=15) (time 1)	0	1	1	2	2	4	1	0	0	1
Work (n=17) (time 2)	0	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	0	1
Pastimes (n=16) (time 1)	1	3	3	1	1	4	1	1	1	0
Pastimes (n=16) (time 2)	0	2	6	1	0	2	2	2	0	0
Abstracts (n=7) (time 1)	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	0
Abstracts (n=7) (time 2)	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	1
Community (n=4) (time 1)	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Community (n=5) (time 2)	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
Money (n=3) (time 1)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Money (n=3) (time 2)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Friends (n=15) (time 2)	2	1	7	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
Friends (n=15) (time 2)	1	2	6	2	1	3	0	0	0	0
Personal Time (n=3) (time 1)	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Personal Time (n=4) (time 2)	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship (n=5) (time 1)	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship (n=5) (time 2)	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
Work/College (n=2) (time 1)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Work/College (n=1) (time 2)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Social (n=11) (time 1)	0	1	4	2	2	1	1	0	0	0
Social (n=11) (time 2)	0	0	4	3	2	0	0	0	1	1
Religion (n=5) (time 1)	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Religion (n=5) (time 2)	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
General (n=30) (time 1)	2	2	15	6	2	2	1	0	0	0
General (n=30) (time 2)	1	7	11	5	5	0	0	0	1	0

quote below reflects the high degree of satisfaction that participants reported deriving from their involvement with their family:

> *"P17: ok well I put eight for my family, ok you know in terms of overall satisfaction*
> *I: overall yeah*
> *P17: yeah now I went home you see the only time I thought about this I went home and I said to my husband you know I was asked this question today and it was how do I view our family overall how happy am I in it you know and I said I put eight but I really feel it's ten (laugh)*
> *I: so that's why it's eight over here and ten over here*
>
>
> *P17: it's true like I said I didn't want to show off (laugh) but I do I have a very good relationship with my husband and I have a very good relationship with my children which I work hard at" (P17)*

The 'university' context category satisfaction scores indicate participant satisfaction with this category, with fifteen instances of contexts related to this context category being given a score of seven or higher at time one. This number rose to twenty at time two. The following quotes are illustrative of those participants who reported being highly satisfied with contexts related to the 'university' context category:

> *"P12: …degree is just ten out of ten because I love it" (P12)*

> *"P31: …college got a high score because it's interesting and I'm learning and as I said learning is very important to me and I do feel it is going to be very difficult when it comes to exams and that but I'm very satisfied with what's going on so far" (P31)*

The satisfaction score given to the 'general' context category was obtained in response to a question in the LDSB asking the participants "how satisfied would you say you are in your life overall?". At time one there were twenty-five instances of participants giving an overall satisfaction score of seven or higher. This number dropped to twenty-four at time two:

"I: and then overall eight it's still a pretty good score
P24: yeah I am satisfied with the way things are running on an
everyday basis, some days are bad and some days are brilliant but
overall I'd give it an eight but like there's just never enough hours in
the day but I'll get through it" (P24)

The most common score participants gave themselves overall was eight. There were

fifteen instances at time one where participants gave a satisfaction score of eight for

their lives overall. This dropped to eleven instances at time two.

11.3.4. Perceived Context Category Motivators
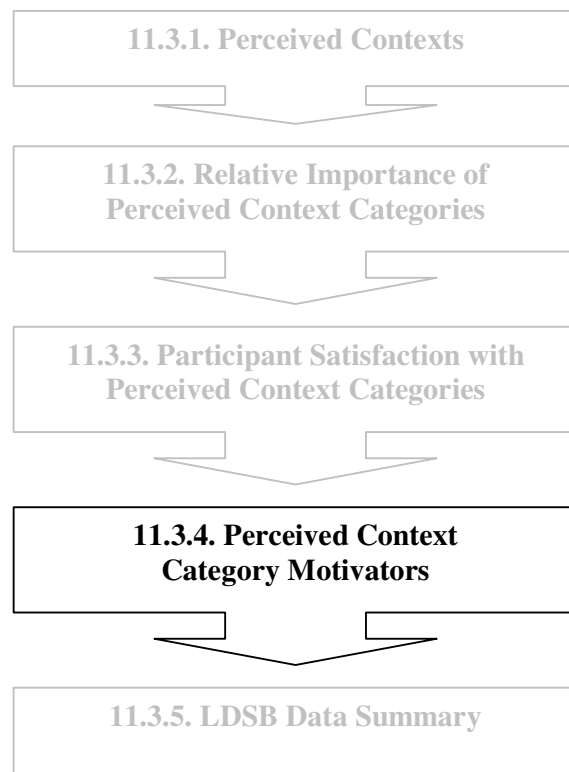
Figure 64. The structure of 11.3. life domain study booklet [LDSB] results: 11.3.4.
Perceived context category motivators

Table 21 Motivators attributed to perceived contexts presented in terms of the context categories

Context Categories (n=number of times participants perceived this context category)	Satisfaction Score									
	10	**9**	**8**	**7**	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
	(the numbers below represent the number of times contexts related to a context category were given each satisfaction score, at time one and time two)									
Family (n=39) (time 1)	10	8	10	6	1	2	1	0	0	1
Family (n=39) (time 2)	11	5	9	9	0	2	1	1	0	1
University (n=26) (time 1)	3	3	7	2	4	4	1	1	0	0
University (n=28) (time 2)	2	4	8	6	1	3	1	0	2	0
Work (n=15) (time 1)	0	1	1	2	2	4	1	0	0	1
Work (n=17) (time 2)	0	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	0	1
Pastimes (n=16) (time 1)	1	3	3	1	1	4	1	1	1	0
Pastimes (n=16) (time 2)	0	2	6	1	0	2	2	2	0	0
Abstracts (n=7) (time 1)	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	0
Abstracts (n=7) (time 2)	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	1
Community (n=4) (time 1)	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Community (n=5) (time 2)	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0
Money (n=3) (time 1)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Money (n=3) (time 2)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Friends (n=15) (time 2)	2	1	7	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
Friends (n=15) (time 2)	1	2	6	2	1	3	0	0	0	0
Personal Time (n=3) (time 1)	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Personal Time (n=4) (time 2)	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship (n=5) (time 1)	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship (n=5) (time 2)	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
Work/College (n=2) (time 1)	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Work/College (n=1) (time 2)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Social (n=11) (time 1)	0	1	4	2	2	1	1	0	0	0
Social (n=11) (time 2)	0	0	4	3	2	0	0	0	1	1
Religion (n=5) (time 1)	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Religion (n=5) (time 2)	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
General (n=30) (time 1)	2	2	15	6	2	2	1	0	0	0
General (n=30) (time 2)	1	7	11	5	5	0	0	0	1	0

The LDSB gathered data relating to participant motivations within the different contexts they described (discussed here in terms of the context categories) (see figure 64). This examination utilised the motivational sources (intrinsic, extrinsic, goal internalisation, external self-concept and internal self-concept) proposed by Barbuto and Scholl (1998) and Leonard, Beauvais and Scholl (1999) in a self-concept based motivation metatheory. Where participants wished to use other words/phrases, rather than those provided (see appendix 1) to describe what was motivating them in the contexts they perceived as existing in their life this was permitted. Based on data, provided by these participants in their LDSBs and participant interviews, these words were attributed to appropriate motivational sources as part of the analytic process. The motivator for the 'general' context was obtained in the interview by asking the participant to choose words, from the word list (see appendix 1), that represented what was most important to them in general.

The motivators that participants chose for the contexts they perceived as existing in their lives, at time one and time two, can be seen in table 21.

The core findings that are viewed as noteworthy here are:

11.3.4.1. Family Context Category

At time one there were twelve instances of participants choosing the goal internalisation motivator for contexts related to the 'family' context category. This rose to sixteen at time two:

> *"P15: …I think family for me family is based on values and trust well*
> *trust wasn't in there you know so values beliefs*
> *I: If you think there's a word that is more accurate, you can throw*
> *those in there*

P15: Well it would all be within the values you know that core I think emmm, as I say I just think that family life is based on values and principles and beliefs and some of them may be idealistic" (P15)

There were also eleven instances of participants choosing the external self-concept motivator for contexts related to the 'family' context category at time one:

"I: so in terms of the words that ended up showing what's important in those categories why did they break down like that like here there's a strong sense of that kind of recognition and approval being the most important
P13: yeah
I: like why did it break down like that with family
P13: because you know yourself if your family doesn't approve of stuff it makes things very difficult doesn't it you know that kind of a way"
(P13)

However, at time two this had dropped to four:

"I: and in terms of the words here that ended up showing what was important in each area
P13: no that's changed
I: yeah
P13: yeah
I: so what would it be now for the family rather than approval
P13: it would be more about how they are not to do with me or their approval of me it would be that they are well yeah now things change like, like a few months ago I was looking for their approval but now I'm not I've gone past that
I: so it's more just
P13: I'm looking out for their welfare really I don't really care what approval they give me you know it's gone beyond that" (P13)

The above quotes, from P13, reflect a trend where participants, between time one and time two, moved away from describing themselves in terms of being motivated by the external self-concept motivator.

11.3.4.2. University Context Category

Examining the 'university' context category, there were nineteen instances of participants choosing the internal self-concept motivator at time one, while there were

only six instances of participants choosing other motivators for this category. At time

two this number had dropped to seventeen:

> *"P2: …education is really about personal achievement because I*
> *always felt like I wasn't really achieving much working in an office*
> *and that kind of thing, and to achieve my goal of being just a good*
> (name of profession) *like, would be to go and do my degree and get as*
> *much work experience as I can, and then you know, I myself*
> *personally would feel kind of happy like" (P2)*

11.3.4.3. Work Context Category

There were five instances, out of ten, of participants choosing the extrinsic

motivator for the 'work' context category at time one. At time two this changed to six

instances out of twelve:

> *"I: and in terms of the work there again a division between money and*
> *fun but like*
> *P12: bit of a workaholic*
> *I: yeah*
> *P12: I'd work maybe forty fifty hours a week*
> *I: and are you still doing that or have you*
> *P12: yeah I'm still working three or four nights a week*
> *I: yeah what's that in*
> *P12: as a care assistant because the money was absolutely crap as a*
> *dental nurse so I'm working with an agency doing care assistant work*
> *at night time I'd do three or four nights but emm it's great fun I love*
> *the interaction with the patients and the other staff but I've a mortgage*
> *at the end of the day as well so*
> *I: ah yes*
> *P12: yeah technicality, and eventually I'll have a house and a degree*
> *hopefully" (P12)*

This quote illustrate a trend among the participants to describe contexts related to the

'work' context category as contexts that only exist in their lives in order to facilitate

the effective management of the other parts of their lives, for example a participant

would work in a part-time job in order to provide money for rent, bills, food and

university related expenses.

11.3.4.4. Pastimes, Friends and Social Context Categories

In the 'pastimes', 'friends' and 'social' context categories the dominant motivator was the intrinsic motivator, as participants described contexts related to these context categories as being predominantly about having fun and enjoying oneself. There were eight instances, out of fifteen, of participants choosing the intrinsic motivator, for contexts related to the 'pastimes' context category, at time one. At time two this had changed to nine out of thirteen instances:

> *"P36:…the reading and research is just to activate my brain because with all these shitty jobs you don't get a chance to, sort of do anything intelligent you know and so that's only sort of*
> *I: and would that be I mean in terms of these like socialising and reading and research would they be for fun for some kind of personal achievement or*
> *P36: well this is for fun*
> *I: yeah the reading and research*
> *P36: whether it's an achievement now maybe that's intertwined in there somewhere but I do it for fun, because I'm interested" (P36)*

There were eleven instances, out of fifteen, of participants choosing the intrinsic motivator for the 'friends' context category at time one. This changed to nine instances out of fifteen at time two:

> *"P12: my friends ah I've had them for the last maybe twenty so there's a real stable base we've always been friends but it's about having fun you don't go out with someone on your on night off that you're going to just sit in a pub and fall asleep or sit in and watch coronation street we go out with the girls and have an absolute laugh and a really good time just time to relax, because what's the point in having friends that stress you out your friends are supposed to be there when you are stressed out you know what I mean there's no point having friends that add to your stress or hassles you know there needs to be positive vibes" (P12)*

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Contexts related to the 'social' context category, at time one, had eight instances, out of eleven, of participants choosing the intrinsic motivator. This dropped to seven instances out of eleven at time two:

> "I: and then emmm, social is pretty self explanatory
> P1: yeah fun fun fun" (P1)

11.3.4.5. The General Context Category

The 'general' context category motivators were obtained within the interview by asking the participants to identify motivators that were most salient in their lives. There were fourteen instances, at time one, of participants choosing the internal self-concept motivator, and this increased to nineteen instances at time two:

> "I: emmm, this is the same exercise as that but I want you to do it but not thinking of any specific situation, you know what I mean
> P1: yeah
> I: so you're to do it thinking of no specific situation
> P1: no specific situation
> I: yeah
> P1: in these ones you're saying that's what's important to me in terms of my family that's what's important to me in terms of university this one has to be just what's important to you but not in relation to any
> P1: ah yeah right
> I: specific place or time or setting
> P1: ah right ok (long pause) now
> I: ok so personal achievement enjoying myself extrinsic rewards recognition and fun and then the two most important personal achievement and enjoying myself and then personal achievement, I was noticing that in the other one it's like a good em, a good mix like I want to enjoy myself but here are my goals you know
> P1: that's it
> I: yeah ok
> P1: you've got to get that balance" (P1)

There were nine instances of participants choosing the goal internalisation motivator for the 'general' context category. This dropped to seven instances at time two:

*"I: now this is the same exercise as this but this time you have to think
of just yourself and not think of emmm any specific location but just in
terms of yourself
P15: mmm
I: so there you go (long pause) so values meet your own standards
beliefs enjoying yourself personal achievement and then the two most
important are values and meet your own standards and then the most
important are values, which is pretty reflective of emm,
P15: all the way through yeah
I: in all the other ones and you were saying those were interlinked
P15: yeah
I: so is it that all those words make up a general feeling
P15: I think they're all interlinked I think, to have standards you have
to have values you have to have beliefs, emmm, and within that there
has to be a sense of personal achievement
I: mmm
P15: but we're here to enjoy ourselves really, if you don't enjoy
yourself you're miserable
I: yeah
P15: (laugh) and nobody wants that"* (P15)

11.3.5. LDSB Data Summary

This section presented the data from the participants LDSBs, along with
supporting illustrative quotes where appropriate. This data is related to the contexts
the participants perceived as existing in their lives, the relative importance of those
contexts, the participants perceived satisfaction with those contexts and what the
participants perceived as motivating them within those contexts, at time one and time
two.

Between time one and time two participants' overall sense of the structure of
their lives, and hence their identity-portfolios, generally remained stable. However,
there were also some notable changes within some participants' perceptions of the
contexts in their lives, with regard to the relative importance of certain contexts or the
dominant motivator for a particular context.

In order to further expand on the results presented thus far, this chapter will now present the research findings relating to participants' perceptions of a non-context-specific part of their life, which has already been discussed in terms of a general context/general context category and is related here to the concept of the general-identity. The chapter will also present results related to how the participants see themselves and the structure of their lives in the future, which is related here to the concept of possible future-identity-structures.

11.4. The General-Identity: Perceiving a Non-context-specific Part of Oneself

Chapter twelve has previously discussed results that emerged from participants LDSB data, along with participant interviews where appropriate. There will now be a presentation of results, which emerged from participant interview data, regarding participants perceptions of a non-context-specific element to their identity (see figure 65).
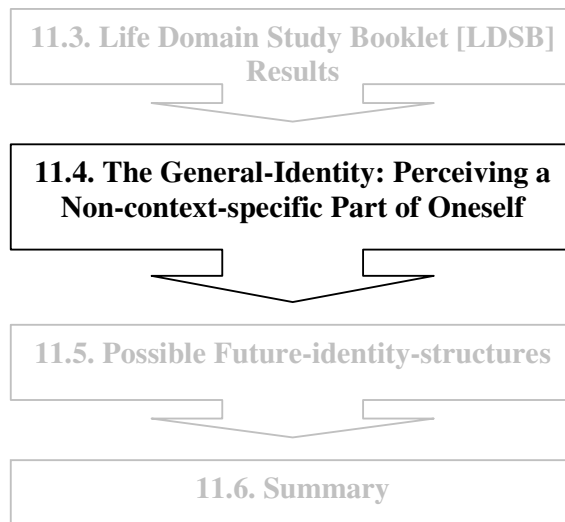
Figure 65. The structure of chapter eleven: 11.4. The general-identity: Perceiving a non-context-specific part of oneself

Eighteen of the participants readily perceived the existence of a non-context-specific element to their identity, when this was discussed in the time one interview:

> *"I: so we've been talking about the specific parts of your life but would you see another part of you that is not you in any of these specific contexts and more a just you or an essential you*
> *P26: the personal time is what I would regard as that*
> *I: so time for self reflection or that*
> *P26: yeah having a bit of time for myself to think about myself or whatever to do the things that make me tick*
> *I: and how different is who you are in that kind of space compared with you are in these other places*
> *P26: how different am I, in in that space I am probably I don't know how to phrase it but maybe I'm a step back from all these people where I consider and maybe strategise about what happens in the other four areas I'm, I don't know whether I'm saying this clearly but, it is one step back from all those other areas or above even, where you just take a different maybe not a different view, you just how do I say it, I don't know now how to put it in words but this is the guy who's doing things up here and the other guy is the guy standing back reflecting making strategies and whatever" (P26)*

In the following quote P24 describes a non-context-specific part to her life

that is a part of, but also provides a base for, all the context-specific parts:

> *"I: and you think that kind of striving comes into every part of your life or might it come out differently in different places*
> *P24: no it would affect all the categories that I have mentioned, I think it builds the base that the other categories are on it's like a chain reaction I can see it through all the headings" (P24)*

Participants who readily perceived their general-identity conceptualised it in different

ways, often due to their specific life experience, for example P22 had learned a

technique for self-appraisal or self-monitoring from his acting career:

> *"P22: I would I, I have taken from all the experiences that I that I gained from the acting world and all the kind of self-analysis that you go through as an actor when you're creating characters and all that kind of thing all the workshops and, basically the stripping away of certain aspects of your character to be able to, put that into different*

characters and stuff emmm what I found was I adopted the eh something they call in the theatre world and I'm sure it exists in lots of other aspects of life which is the third eye perspective to be able to look at yourself from the outside emmm which is very helpful for the approach I had for my acting emm which would have been very I suppose, for want of a better phrase quite an in-depth approach to basically to create a character how to get into the head of whatever I needed to do
I: mmm
P22: emmm, so it was crucial to have that third eye perspective and I have brought that into my everyday life too to be able to, to question myself" (P22)

P22 describes utilising these tactics, learned from a context-specific-identity as an actor, for self-reflection and identity-management in terms of his general-identity.

11.4.1. Isolation as a Facilitator for engagement with the Non-context-specific-identity

Participants described being isolated from other people or specific contexts as something that facilitated their engagement with the non-context-specific part of themselves:

"I think it's just when I go off and I'm, go for a walk on my own or I'm that's when I do it like and make decisions solely by myself, each group would have their own opinion on this and whenever I make one on my own I just have to be on my own and make the decision" (P23)

"I: would you ever take self-reflective time where you wouldn't exactly be in any of those places
P32: time out of mind, when I'm pretty much on my own I do get time to reflect like that so yeah I would do a lot of self reflection" (P32)

11.4.2. Self-reflection

Participants reported that engaging in self-reflection was a core activity in terms of engaging with their general-identity. This involved reviewing their life, placing things from the specific contexts in their life in perspective and making decisions:

Time one

> *"P15:…when I was really off earlier in the year and that I had time while I was recovering for me, emmm, and to look around and see yeah well there is a big world out there and maybe there is something else for you out there" (P15)*

Time two

> *"I: and in terms of managing all the different parts of your life at the moment there what are the things that are making it easier and what are the things that are making things more difficult at the moment*
> *P25: I think the thing that is making things easier is my own attitude I've eased up on myself a bit my priorities have changed a bit, that would be, eh not trying to be missus perfect and getting that out of your head because it's not as important to me now to appear to be missus perfect why I don't know but it's just something that's happened probably because there's more things going on in my life whereas before that was all that was going on it was the main focus, so it's because of myself it's me that's changed in relation to all of that" (P25)*

11.4.3. No Time for That/Doesn't Make Sense

Other participants did not readily engage with the concept of having a non-context-specific part to their life, in that the concept did not make sense to them, or they described themselves as not having any time in their life to engage with any such not-context-specific part of themselves:

> *"P17…I don't have time for that (laugh)*
> *I: yeah yeah*
> *P17: I don't have that kind of, I don't have the luxury of finding myself" (P17)*

> *"I: ...would you also have a sense of emmm, being able to describe a part of yourself that is essentially you or you at your core not you in any of these specific locations*
> *P21: oh god I don't think I could hah ha I don't think this,*
> *I: like if I said just think of yourself as yourself not in any of those locations or any specific context is that easy or is it like*

P21: no very hard
I: yeah
P21: it's almost an unknown concept an unknown idea" (P21)

11.4.4. Context-Specific-identities Perceived as More or Less Reflective of the Participant's General-identity

All the participants, whether they readily perceived the existence of a non-context-specific-identity or not, were able to describe the contexts in their lives that they felt represented them best 'as a person', for example with their friends:

"I: which one of these sections then would best reflect who you are as a person if you had to say that's who I am as a person
P12: my friends the section with my friends because I can just be myself
I: yeah
P12: I'll still kind of put them in front of me but I'd still be myself a hundred and twenty-five percent whereas with the family I'd be, you know yourself when you're around your parents you'd be more cautious about what you'd say or how you'd act an the same with my two brothers because you don't want your two brothers knowing everything you do and then in work you can't be yourself all the time" (P12)

P17 constructed elements of her personal history as being what made up 'who she was', and 'who she wished to be':

"P17:…I'm interested in the questions that you've asked because none of them like you were saying things like what makes you, and I think what makes me is my history makes me, I'm adopted, I'm a dyslexic you know what I mean I was uneducated until you know recently until I started going back these are three things, I suppose if you were that question that you asked what defines me these define me
I: yeah
P17: they define me because they're the things I'm fighting against they're the things I'm improving on and they're the things I want better
I: are they the things that you sort of set your standards
P17: they come from me they make me they make up who I am" (P17)

The participants also readily described the differences they perceived as existing between being engaged with the non-context-specific side of themselves, or being in those specific contexts that they felt reflected them best, and being in specific contexts in their life that did not reflect them as well:

> *"I: and that sense of yourself would that be different from how you are in these other places*
> *P27: yeah like if I'm a teacher you can't let someone in with you because students will want to batter you so you have to have cut offs and cut off techniques and then in my work you could have people talking to you like you're a subordinate and you want to say do you know who you're talking to but you don't and you just do the job as best you can and get paid for it whereas at home I'd be more relaxed especially with my wife emmm the kids are mini shoot offs of us and that's great but sometimes you have to make boundaries you know when they don't want to go to bed or break the rules and all that, so home life is the closest to myself that I'll ever be emm I'd be different at home and closest to my inner core and with my wife I'm totally me*
> *I: and what about in college"* (P27)

11.4.5. The Perceived Important of having Time to 'be Oneself'

Participants described that having the space and/or time to feel that one could be 'oneself' was an important part of their lives. This was true both of those who readily perceived a non-context-specific part to themselves and of those who saw their general-identity as being more closely tied to one specific context:

> *"I: and like is it important to you to have that sense of yourself and kind of*
> *P13: yeah sometimes you kind of have to, not forget but that's what you have to like step back from situations*
> *I: yeah*
> *P13: and just be the person, or find out who you are even at that like if I'm just being a mother and doing my mother roles you can't yeah I know what you mean definitely*
> *I: and like do you find that important to have that time or not time but that sense of yourself like*
> *P13: yeah because you realise who you are as a person rather than just student mother"* (P13)

11.4.6. Conflict between the Non-context-specific and Context-specific-identities

Participants described conflicts occurring between non-context-specific and context-specific-identities. In the following illustrative quote P34 describes how he perceives a time in his past when there was a conflict between certain values and ideals he held in relation to his general-identity and the specific context of his previous marriage, in that he abandoned or deserted those values and ideals while in his marriage:

> *"P34:…my marriage I loved my wife at the time I had a good marriage but when I think of that marriage I think I deserted myself, to live in that marriage" (P34)*

Some participants described a conflict between their attempts to develop a clear sense of themselves and their desire to live up to the expectations of or gain approval from an external reference group, constructed as being something that has historically influenced their life:

> *"P3:…I was a fairly miserable person you know what I mean and like with this sense of achievement I have myself I'm here to eh to take this on like it's a big challenge for me personally but also to enjoy the experience as well meeting it's all about meeting new people establishing my own identity which where I worked before my brother worked there so I was always somebody's brother you know so that's what it's about like enjoying myself in that relation like because I never really kind of let go of myself before I was a bit more reserved …it's just kind of eh coming here I don't know there's a certain sense of liberty about it it's great it's just nobody knows you" (P3)*

Conflict involving the general-identity was constructed, by P27, P13 and P9 as something that could lead to mental illness and potential, associated consequences:

"I: and in terms of having that sense of yourself how important is it to have that sense of yourself
P27: oh well without that sense of yourself you're looking at a nervous breakdown and that's what I had so emmm, I was in a home and stuff like that so, if you don't have your sense of self if you don't have that sorted out then you'll end up crashing, if you have that central core stable you can have a cut off under stress and say I can't do that I can do this and start delegating maybe just internally because what happened before was I was going I'll do this for you I'll do that for you and before I knew it I was running around when they don't actually care if you do things for them or not it's you that's doing it and you have to be able to say I can't do it or I can't do it in that time and people will say well ok, can you do it later or whatever it can be that easy, whereas if you're approaching it from the inside you're on panic stations and you'll just be telling everyone you'll get everything done and it'll pile up and you'll on your way to a breakdown" (P27)

11.5. Possible Future-identity-structures
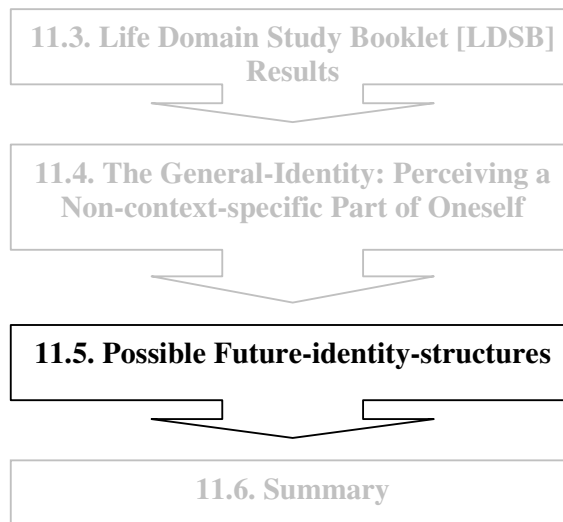
Figure 66. The structure of chapter twelve: 11.5. Possible future-identity-structures

The participants often described themselves in relation to the different possibilities for who they may become in the future (see figure 66), both in terms of who they wanted to be in general, and in relation to who they wanted to be in the specific contexts that were perceived as existing in their lives:

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"I: and in terms of the future plans like what's driving you there
P37: well I have my long term objectives to have my own house and to
have a good paying job of some sort you know
I: yeah
P37: I mean that's what everybody else wants too but I mean like I'm a
lot of people expect that that'll just come to them whereas I'm like no
you have to work for it" (P37)

The participants also constructed themselves in relation to those possible futures with

which they disidentified and wished to avoid:

"P10: …I've only one option to do this and then that'll open up other
options because I don't want to be like those people who spend their
lives travelling and having a ball but then they get older and still have
to work that crappy job and then the drugs wear off and they end up
with a kid or two and it's not fun anymore, that's not going to me"
(P10)

When the participants were asked "what would make them happier or more satisfied

in their lives?" their responses commonly described the fulfilment of their goals in

terms of who they wanted to be in the future:

"I: hmm, yeah emm, so what at the moment, what takes away from
your happiness at the moment, with your overall score (an overall
score for how satisfied P1 is with her life) *being eight there's a two*
there so something is taking away from that
P1: I knew you'd ask about that two
I: and then that two is like well, what could make you more satisfied
P1: more satisfied, getting a first (a first class honours in P1's
university course) *and ehh eh getting a great job out of it and emm at*
the same time hanging on to the friends that I have at the moment, and
my boyfriend that's it really so the two would be about the nervousness
that I don't have that yet
I: right that it's still that the goals haven't been reached
P1: yeah, that's it like, you can't be completely satisfied now or else
you won't strive to do anything" (P1)

A minority of participants described a large disconnect between who they were in the

present, or where they perceived their current circumstances would lead them in the

future, and who they wanted to be in the future. This kind of disconnect was

constructed as being a source of conflict for these participants, and led them to make changes to the current structure of their lives, in order to regain a sense of connection between their present and their desired future. In the following quotes P21 describes the disconnect she perceived between who she wanted to be in the future and where she perceived the academic course she had just started was going to take her, which led to her dropping out of that academic course:

> *"I: so basically the idea of who you wanted to be at the end didn't fit*
> *P21: no*
> *I: who they were telling you you were going to be at the end of it*
> *P21: absolutely they were telling me I was going to be this and I just wanted to tell them no no no I'm not here to be that I'm here to be, they were telling me I'm going to be A and I'm here to be B and I, and, I think there was some eh ah I think there was some sort of realisation during the summer that I was doing this but, I thought no I'll get over it it'll pass"* (P21)

> *"at the end of four years I didn't want to be an engineer and really if you can see the end goal then it's easier to play the game if you can see we're going it's a very hard to motivate yourself in any direction"* (P21)

11.6. Summary

This chapter has presented analytic results relating to the participants descriptions of how they perceived the structure of their lives, and thus their identity-portfolios. From the findings that emerged from the analysis of the LDSBs and the participants' interview data several concluding points may be made. Participants were readily able to perceive their lives as being divided up into different context-specific and non-context-specific elements. As they discussed themselves in terms of these different elements these reflected participants' context-specific-identities and non-

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context-specific-identity (the general-identity). The majority of participants were readily able to provide differentiated satisfaction scores for the different contexts they perceived as existing in their lives. The majority of participants were readily able to place these contexts, and thus their associated identities, in a hierarchy according to the perceived importance of the different contexts. The participants were readily able to articulate which context in their life they perceived as best reflecting who they were overall 'as a person', that is to say which context in their life best reflected their general-identity. However, only eighteen of the thirty-four participants readily perceived a non-context-specific, general-identity with which they regularly and specifically engaged. The participants were also readily able to describe their possible future-identity-structures through their discussions of who they will be, would like to be and who they would not like to be in the future.

Chapter thirteen reviews and presents participant responses to the issue of how they engaged in creating a new, context-specific-identity. Participant narratives relating to how the participants described themselves in the university context, as they engaged in the process of identity-creation, will be presented.

12. Context-specific-identity-creation

Narratives

12.1. The Position of Chapter Twelve within Section B
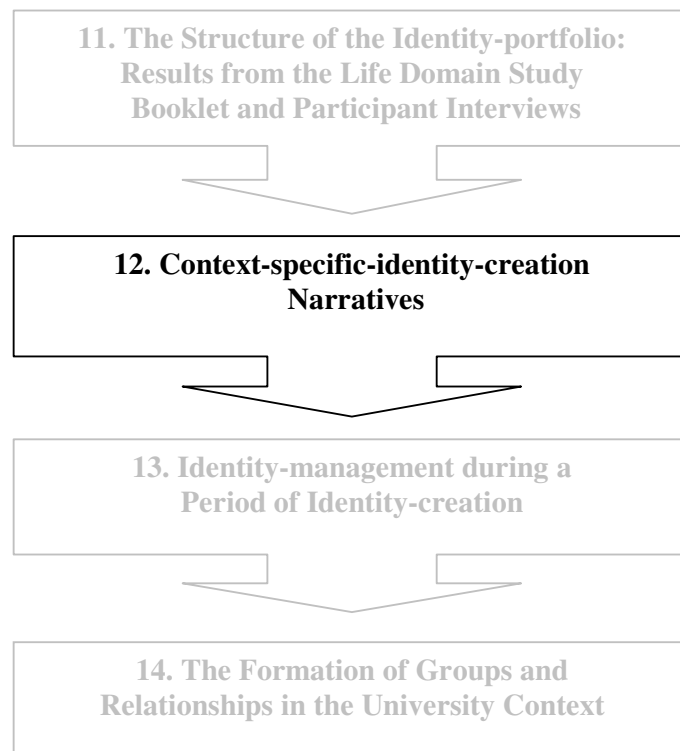
Figure 67. The structure of section B: Chapter twelve. Context-specific-identity-creation narratives

Chapter twelve presented research results, which emerged from participants LDSB data and interview data, related to participants' identity-structures. Chapter twelve will now present research results related to the way in which the process of identity-creation affected the participant's identity-structures/identity-portfolio (see figure 67).

12.2. The Structure of Chapter Twelve

This chapter presents the research findings produced through an analysis of the interview data that focused on how the process of identity-creation affected the

12.3. Beginning of Narratives at Time One

12.4. Identity-creation Narratives at Time One

12.5. Identity-creation Narratives at Time Two

12.6. Summary
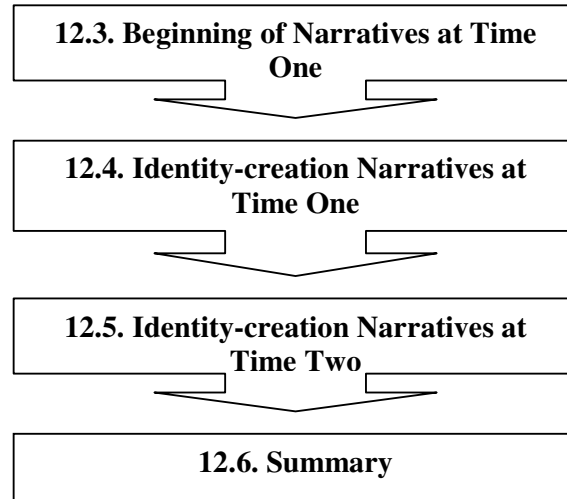
Figure 68. The structure of chapter twelve

participant's identity-structures (identity-portfolio) (see figure 68). The participants'

narratives capture their construction of how they came to be in a university as mature

students. Data related to these narratives was gathered during the participant's first

few weeks in university (time one of the research study) and seven months later (time

two of the research study). These narratives describe the participant's retrospective

construction of how they have 'come to be' mature students, why they made this

choice at this point in their lives, and why this choice was an appropriate one. At time

one these narratives discussed the participant's past and included their recent arrival

in the university. At time two these narratives were maintained, updated or

transformed to more accurately represent the participant's self-perceptions at that time

(see figure 69). The analysis of these constructions demonstrates how the use of

overarching narratives allowed participants to give meaning to the ways in which their

identity-structures were changing during the process of creating a new context-

specific-identity.

Time

Beginning of Narratives: Retrospective Narrative on Pre-entry Period at Time One	**Narratives at Time One**	**Narratives at Time two: Retrospective Narrative on 'Journey' from Time One to Time Two**
-Facilitating 'becoming a mature student' -The Effects of a period of Self-reflection -Adult children and their Parents -Difficulties in 'becoming a Mature student'	-Being 'on the path' to becoming a mature student • 'On the path' to a better career • 'On the path' to academic achievement • 'On the path' to completion of a personal mission -'Being a worker' to 'being A mature student -'Being a homemaker/parent to 'being a mature student -'Being a socialite' to 'being a mature student' -'Becoming a mature student' as a fresh start	-Overcoming newcomer anxiety -Milestones -Perceived gradual progression from time one to time two -'Being a worker' to 'being a mature student' -'Being a homemaker/ parent' to 'being a mature student' -Exiting the context but retaining the student identity

Figure 69. Development of participants' overarching narratives

12.3. Beginning of Narratives at Time One
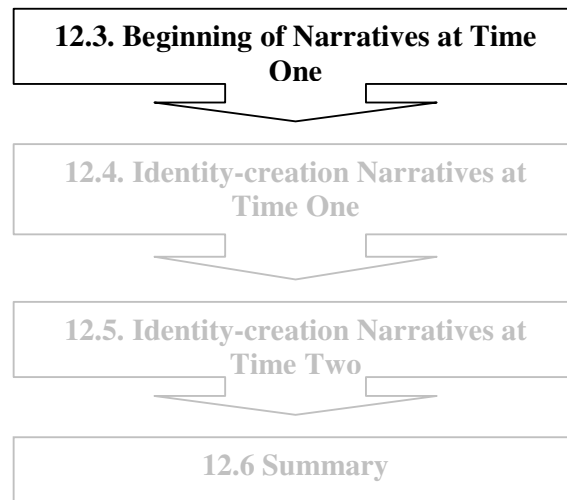
Figure 70. The structure of chapter twelve: 12.3. Beginning of narratives at time one

Participants, in constructing their identity-creation narratives at time one of the current research study, provided a retrospective view of the beginning of those narratives (see figure 70). The participants discussed factors, internal and external, which had, in their past, impacted on their journey to becoming mature students.

12.3.1. Facilitating 'Becoming a Mature Student'

Some participants described how they 'made space' in their lives in order to facilitate becoming a mature student. The participants contrasted their lives before this space had been made with what it is like after the change. This was also accomplished by contrasting what their lives were like in the present with what they perceived their lives would be like if they had not made the changes to their lives:

"I: and in terms of that being a part of your life it didn't really get a look in in the different parts there
P22: the acting
I: yeah or does it exist now or is it just not currently
P22: it's just not currently there I couldn't afford to… with going back to college…if I'm going to do something I'm going to do it completely so I couldn't afford for me to do this and still try to, keep my hand in keep in touch with the agents and if something came up I don't want to know about it (laugh)
I: (laugh)
P22: quite simply, emmm so the phone calls that have come in since I've come here about shows and of course I mean for me of course it was going to happen because I'd worked for ten years… the first time I said no back in maybe May or so was the hardest but after that it became a lot easier… I've knocked it on the head for this time, eh it's just like I suppose again it's because of my approach to it it takes a phenomenal amount of effort on my part when I am doing something and I just couldn't afford the time" (P22)

12.3.2. The Effects of a Period of Self-reflection

Becoming a mature student was also described in a narrative where it represented a life change that is being implemented by the participant after a period of self-reflection on their life. This can be seen in the following illustrative quote where P15 describes how a period of self-reflection, where she was taken out of her normal routine, led her to make certain decisions that would change her life and led her to attend university:

"P15: I was ill earlier in the year and I was out, I had surgery and I was out of work for four months, that was the first time I had ever had time to myself because the only other times that I had long periods off work was maternity leave and in a maternity leave you have a baby you don't have time, well your brain is addled and you're in the twilight, well I was in the twilight zone it was only when I was really off earlier in the year and that I had time while I was recovering for me, emmm, and to look around and see yeah well there is a big world out there and maybe there is something else for you out there I was always involved how I came back to this course was for the last 10 years I've been involved with the (name of area) *Read and Write Scheme as an adult literacy tutor, and I and I really like that I get a*

kick from it so, that's where I linked in with the (name of course)*"*
(P15)

12.3.3. Adult Children and their Parents

A minority of participants constructed their narrative of deciding to become a mature student as being connected to their relationships with their parents or siblings. As can be seen in the following examples some participants were focused on proving themselves to their parents or siblings or attaining their approval by succeeding in a third level course:

> *"P3: …I want to prove to myself and also I suppose to prove to them*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: to achieve what I'm doing now at thirty-two years of age, going to university and being the first one in the family to go to university and just to get recognition and approval to say well ye were wrong, but first and foremost it's for myself and then yeah to be able to turn around to the family and go well there you are so that's why that would and then to get recognition for them to recognise what I've achieved" (P3)*

12.3.4. Difficulties in 'Becoming a Mature Student'

Participants constructed their becoming mature students as involving a degree of difficulty. These difficulties originated principally in the participants experiencing certain complications in changing from a previous 'way of being' to the new 'way of being' as a mature student. These difficulties occurred where participants were changing from principally being a worker to being a mature student:

> *"P15: …I've come through a very difficult period, in that, we had a lot of difficulties in work…I had difficulty with some of my male colleagues who had moved onto the top management grade (pause) and I felt that they lowered their principles, and they sold people up the swanny basically and I had huge difficulty in dealing with that with people who I would have classed as my friends for a long number of years that eh, I felt let down by them you know…*

…I: and was that a big factor in the transition from out of work to here
P15: Oh yeah…I just felt I can't work with these people anymore you know
I: And that probably makes this transition, it would have far more poignancy…
P15: Well it is, I mean I have to say, I mean the first morning I came down here I cried all the way down the road because its just so emotional because you're leaving people who you know, who you've grown up with basically for twenty-five years and then while I would say, I, we tried to make up with the people that we felt had really damaged our relationship both working and personal… I was very sad about it, you know so it is very poignant, this whole change thing and I'm finding the transition quite challenging to say the least" (P15)

And changing from principally being a homemaker/parent to being a mature student:

"P25: …if I'm studying at home I'd be telling them all to turn off the TV and shut up because I'm studying so that's the newer part that's going to interfere or, again with them coming in and their dinner being on the table and their clothes being ironed and all the rest that's just not going to happen because there's not enough hours in the day
I: well they're old enough now to do it themselves
P25: exactly because it's just trying to get them to realise that because at the moment I'm still trying to do everything and that's what I'm saying I have to take a step back and said it I don't care if you don't have any clean clothes or I don't care if you starve there's a fridge full of food you know how to cook it but it's very hard when you've always done it it's very hard to switch off no matter how hard I try I still seem to be there cooking the dinner and cleaning the clothes" (P25)

As can be seen in the quote above, within the participants' roles as homemakers it was their perceptions of themselves as parents and of their relationships with their children that caused the most conflict.

12.4. Identity-creation Narratives at Time One

This subsection of chapter thirteen will present research findings relating to the various identity-creation narratives that emerged from participant data collected at time one of the current research study (see fig.71).
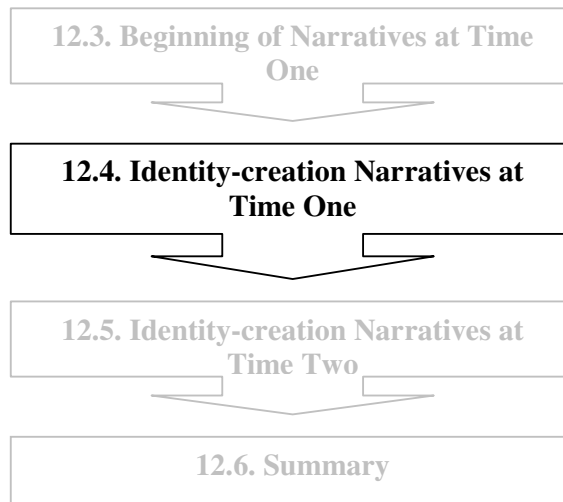
Figure 71. The structure of chapter twelve: 12.4. Identity-creation narratives at time one

12.4.1. Being 'On the Path' to Becoming a Mature Student12qw1

A method used by participants to embed their choice to become mature students in a coherent narrative was to construct themselves as having been 'on the path' to university for a certain amount of time in their past. University was described as either being a stepping-stone on the way to a future goal, or as the end of the path. The following example from P1 shows how she retrospectively constructs a narrative thread where she was 'on the path' to her current situation, and will continue on to future goals. P1 describes herself as being in control of that future:

> *"P1…I've been, looking along the lines of doing something in communications or journalism for many years…I just have a few things I want to achieve…so I lived up in Belfast for em six months and worked for* (name of television company) *then as an assistant floor manager like so that was a great opportunity and that just opened my eyes and because the competition was so high to get into that… I just had a few things to achieve for myself there and I got them done and then I came home and started working a proper job but I was doing courses at night then as well because I started thinking, eh when I'd finished the course initially I thought I'd get something in television straight away after doing the course but everyone else on the course was after doing a degree already and they were all quite a bit older*

than me and, you know, I was fortunate enough to be let on the course without a degree… so I went and did it and got the best I could out of it but, it wasn't really enough I don't want to go in making cups of tea like in (name of television company) *for a few years first you know, and then I went and did a directing and presenting course and that was more along the lines…so emm so I had all these little projects as well as doing my mundane job so, you know, I knew that at the end of the day I had to go to college get this degree out of the way and then I can go and do what I want to do*
I: it really is a stepping stone on a big long line of goals like
P1: yeah, yeah, so like, I just you know emm all my other friends like who I went to school with they're all finished their degrees now they've all got them like, and they're starting to work now and stuff and emm eh it's it's different like… I don't see myself as being at a worser place having not gone to college straight away, so yeah I've got my personal achievements to get out of (name of college)*" (P1)*

Participants differed with regard to how they constructed their decision to attend university. The majority of the participants constructed their coming to university as something that would advance their careers and therefore their lives while others described their entering full-time education as being motivated by issues relating to personal achievement for its own sake. The career orientated participants tended to be younger and many of them described themselves as having been on a path to university for quite a while in their past:

> *"P1:…I finally realised what I want to do with my life and how I can go about achieving it, so I applied to two colleges and was accepted for both which surprised me but also gave me more confidence in what I'm about to do" (P1)*

Those participants who perceived their entrance into the university as something they wished to do, purely for themselves, more related to their self-esteem than to becoming more qualified tended to be older and often saw the process as a fulfilment of something they had not had the chance to do or passed up the chance to do earlier in their lives. As one participant who was 74 years old at time one of the research study said:

"P11: …people keep asking me what I'll do with the degree when I get it and I keep telling them I'll probably be buried with it" (P11)

12.4.1.1. 'On the Path' to a Better Career

While P1 constructs herself as having accomplished some of her goals but having more to accomplish, she also places herself at the start of a potential career in "communications or journalism". Other participants construct themselves as being further along 'the path' in terms of their career but that attending university is necessary to continue their advancement. This is clear in the next quote where P26 perceives university as "the mechanism I'm going to use to do something about the career":

> *"P26: …In my career with* (name of company)*, I progressed to a certain level, but could not break through that barrier. That led to frustration, I left the main stream that I was in, to try something different. This involved hard work, long hours and had a knock on effect on my home and social life. I lost contact with my peer group as they moved on, with consequent feeling that I had failed… As a first year mature student in* (name of course) *I have undertaken this course as the first step in putting my career back on track" (P26)*

Some participants constructed becoming a mature student as being a means of achieving a more satisfying life in terms of career opportunities, in contrast to an alternative, unsatisfying life:

> *"I: …in college what would it be that drives you*
> *P36: I can't say desperation emmm but in a way it is if I don't do well in college I'm destined to a life of shitty jobs you know what I mean this is my chance and I have to do the best I can so how would you term that" (P36)*

12.4.1.2. 'On the Path' to Academic Achievement

Becoming a mature student was also constructed as a part of an 'on the path' narrative regarding the participant's relationship with education or an education system. For some participants this was described in terms of being previously unsuccessful in the Irish Education System's Leaving Certificate:

> *"P12: …I wouldn't have gotten the points in my leaving cert for it the points are nearly four hundred points now I wouldn't have got that in my leaving cert and I wasn't sure whether I wanted to do* (type of occupation) *or* (type of occupation) *so I did* (type of occupation) *with a view to going on to doing* (type of occupation) *in a year or two so I've loads of work as a care assistant in residential homes and that sort of stuff building towards it so, so it has been a pathway there's been a structure all along" (P12)*

For other, usually older participants, especially those whose previous educational experiences had been negative, becoming a mature student was constructed as being part of a narrative regarding a relationship with education that had a long retrospective reach:

> *"P17: I left school at fourteen… I didn't have a good home, eh life I travelled very young I worked very young em and as a result then my priorities were well this is what I want I want a family that works so I worked hard at it and… the education… what I've just returned to last year, is secondary I'm only doing it I'm doing it because I think it's a gap I'm doing it because…of how I left school and that was because… a student teacher came in realised I had a difficulty in writing paid for an assessment herself eh produced the document that said I was a dyslexic gave it to the nuns who promptly rang my mother and said we think you should take* (P17) *out of school because she's never going to pass an exam… so that's what happened I was taken out of school so I thought well you know I mean I function very well (laugh) in the world I'm going to give it another go" (P17)*

The above quote is an example of a participant who, instead of constructing their becoming a mature student as being a stepping stone to a future goal, describes it in terms of education itself being the goal, in order to make up for something she perceives as lacking in her past.

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12.4.1.3. 'On the Path' to Completion of a Personal Mission

Some participants constructed themselves as being focused on the fulfilment of

a specific personal goal or mission, which held great meaning for them:

> *"P38: ...basically my mother is disabled now as the result of the*
> *negligence of a doctor and there's an awful lot of families that I know*
> *of particularly in the west coast of Ireland where the health boards*
> *aren't properly funded and the cases are being swept under the*
> *carpet... so values being a part in there is that I want to enforce the*
> *values myself and my family have in the legal establishment and the*
> *government and doing* (name of course) *is the best way to do this"*
> *(P38)*

12.4.2. 'Being a Worker' to 'Being a Mature Student'

Over half the participants constructed a narrative that involved a movement

within their perception from being a 'worker' to being a mature student, or from

being someone who goes to work to one who goes to university:

> *"P15: … I took a voluntary early retirement package from there…part*
> *of the early voluntary early retirement package was that if you wanted*
> *to change your career, they would pay you for the first year that you*
> *were on your (missing this word) so I'm actually being paid but I don't*
> *work there, if you know what I mean, ok. I'm still on the employee list,*
> *because they are paying me for the first year, but I'm not working*
> *there…*
> *I: And work-college, you would see that as one area*
> *P15: Well I would now because I've, that's, I'm in a transition period*
> *I've always worked full time or at least job shared, em so I've always*
> *worked I've never been at home, so, like, for me where work is leaving*
> *off I'm picking up with college" (P15)*

The previous experience the participants had gained in the workplace was sometimes

constructed as a positive factor in terms of being able to apply that experience in

making their becoming a mature student easier, especially if they are in related fields,

by treating university as if it were a job:

> *"P20: so I'm here and I'll get in as much work as possible and get it done in (name of college)*
> *I: so in terms of preparation you've set up a work day regardless of lecture time*
> *P20: I have yeah I have my system I know what I have to read each week, I know most students don't want to hear this but I read before I go into the class because, well I'm here to learn I'm not here to do anything else and because I've worked for so long to me this is my work this is what I'm going to be doing for the next year so I come here at nine o clock you know and read the times and see what I have to study" (P20)*

12.4.3. 'Being a Homemaker/Parent' to 'Being a Mature Student'

Some participants described a move, within their perceptions, from being

primarily involved in the care and upkeep of their families to going back to university

and becoming a mature student. These participants were all female:

> *"P17:…I went back to school last year I did a plc course and eh I found it really stimulating I love thinking about things and I love working things out in my head and having something other than you know are my whites as white as you know daz promises, I I'm I've done it for twenty years and I'm now bored with it, I consider my family reared you know and now I want something else that's going to be interesting (pause) I don't know if I'm going to pass I don't know if I'm going to fail I don't know if I'm going to make it I don't know if I'm going to be here next week but I'm taking it day by day and I'm going to give it my best shot…it's a new adventure it's I know nothing I don't know the rules I don't know you know eh, what's expected I don't know eh, how to react, I don't know how you react or eh and interact with say ah the the teachers you know, I'm an adult…am I expected to be in a in a different box than them because I think I'm older than a lot of them and so, its all learning though isn't it so you know I'm dealing with that now and I'm watching that I'm in the right place at the right time and behaving the way everyone is behaving, I want to be the same as everybody else" (P17)*

Many of these participant's, like P17, waited until they had, or were close to having,

an 'empty nest' before making the decision to become a mature student. This

lessening of responsibility within their role as a homemaker facilitated their decision to become a mature student. Also, much as the participants moving from being workers to being mature students sometimes used their previous workplace experience in their new role, some of the participants who were principally homemakers carried parts of that identity with them into their new identity as mature students:

> *"P17: the funny thing about being an adult learner I think I've found is that our standard is higher not because, you know, I mean people say it's because oh, eh the opportunities are fabulous and everything our standards are higher simply because we we we've been laying down the law for so long and I mean like if people like if my children suddenly realise the emperor has no clothes, I'm screwed you know*
> *I: (laugh)*
> *P17: so I have to make sure that I stay up on top of my work because I've been telling them stay up on top of your work you know what do you mean you haven't got it done you know (laugh) so that's why adults I think have this I mean all of the women there have children, yes they all all the adults learners have eh children so they've been sitting there saying do your homework there's no excuse for it you've got a video recorder you can watch it later all this sort of thing" (P17)*

12.4.4. 'Being a Socialite' to 'Being a Mature Student'

A small number of participants constructed themselves as having an identity related to being a reformed/reforming socialite. These participants had directed much of their attention in the past to socialising, partying, having fun, but were now moving to direct their attentions to something more serious, to becoming a mature student and achieving goals linked to that endeavour:

> *"P1: I used to promote loads of clubs in* (name of city) *like jesus I'd be clubbing about four nights a week like and like I'd be the one running the guest-list I'd be the one getting everyone in for free everyone knew my name even just to say cheers or something so it was it was great like for the old partying like emmm, but it takes it's toll after a while after a few years of hardcore partying you're going to be jaded so (laugh) you have to that's that's when you have to start looking around and go you know I think I need a new outlet this life is getting a*

*bit boring now so I think I need to eh nurture my intellectual needs you know…
that's when other things started becoming more important for me than my social
life doing courses and getting my wage at the end of the week…I think I've just
kind of matured a bit you know what I mean over the last couple of years from
working and because I've done all that madness like, you know I've been there
done that like I want a bit more from life that's why I'm in college, that's why I'm
pursuing my career" (P1)*

In this illustrative quote P1 describes a move from being focused on an active social
life to being focused on the pursuit of a potentially fulfilling education and career.

12.4.5. 'Becoming a Mature Student' as a Fresh Start

Participants typically discussed the 'journey' or 'path' that had resulted in their
attendance at university in a particular temporal pattern. The narratives beginning was
placed in the past and was then brought up to the present, at time one of the research
study, through a discussion of the short amount of time the participants had been in
the university. One way in which the university was constructed was as a place one
could make a fresh start, a place where one could, as P3 says in the illustrative quote
below, establish one's own identity:

*"P3: I would have to say I was a fairly miserable person you know
what I mean and like with this sense of achievement I have myself I'm
here to eh to take this on like it's a big challenge for me personally but
also to enjoy the experience as well meeting it's all about meeting new
people establishing my own identity…yeah it's just kind of eh coming
here I don't know there's a certain sense of liberty about it it's great it's
just nobody knows you and
I: yeah
P3: it's just a different lifestyle
I: yeah
P3: just a different life to me
I: yeah is it kind of like a clean slate a clean go
P3: to me yeah it is" (P3)*

12.5. Identity-creation Narratives at Time Two
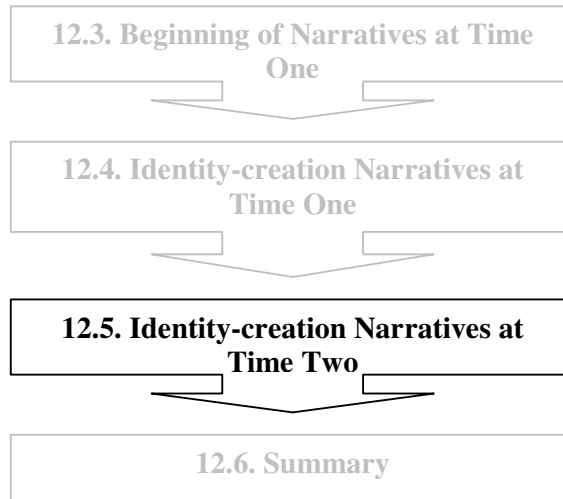
Figure 72. The structure of chapter twelve: 12.5. Identity-creation narratives at time two

At time two of the research study, which gathered interview data from the thirty-four participants approximately seven months after the first interviews, participant narratives relating to how the participant's 'came to be' mature students were examined once again (see figure 72). The participants' narratives, at time two, describe their retrospective (re)construction of the beginning of their time in the university, how they had progressed through the academic year and how they currently perceived their identity within the university.

12.5.1. Overcoming Newcomer Anxiety

Participant narratives described overcoming, or not overcoming, anxiety caused by their entry into the novel university context.

12.5.1.1. 'Feeling Anxious' to 'Feeling Settled In'

Half the participants constructed a narrative where they described experiencing initial anxiety upon their arrival in the university, but that they then managed to overcome this anxiety and arrive at a state of feeling settled in and comfortable within the university context:

> "*I: so if I said how were you getting on at the start of the year how were you getting on back then*
> *P24: I didn't know what to expect to be honest with you because it was completely new to me and it was completely different from what I did expect it was really being dropped in at the deep end as soon as you started you were getting assignments but now it doesn't even seem that big a deal any more you know*
> *I: so back at the start of the year things were less sure*
> *P24: yeah I didn't know what to expect like it's like anyone going into third level education it's definitely not going to be like secondary school anyway I knew that for a fact and I've been out of school for so long that I was kind of like will I stick out like a sore thumb or whatever you know but it was grand I was worrying about nothing*"
> *(P24)*

Several participants, when specifically asked to recount how they had been with regard to feeling anxious or settled in at the start of the academic year (time one), immediately sought to move beyond the confines of that question to produce a narrative that would seamlessly move them from time one to how they perceived themselves at time two:

> "*I: but eh when you look back on the start of the year emmm how were things back then when you look back, from your point of view*
> *P3: like have things changed or*
> *I: no not have things changed but when like you look back on the first time we talked*
> *P3: yeah*
> *I: like if I said like you know just take a minute and describe how you were back then*
> *P3: I'd say I'm a lot more confident and a lot more of a stronger person compared to then anyway*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: I think back then everything was just all new and in a way it was almost like a rabbit in headlights so to speak you know what I mean or*

vulnerable in a way but now like it's totally settled in and a lot more
comfortable with myself as well
I: hmmm
P3: as well as being here and realising that I have a right to be here"
(P3)

12.5.1.2. 'Feeling Anxious' to 'Feeling Settled In due to Knowing Who to Form a

Group/Social Network with'

Participants described how they moved beyond their initial feelings of anxiety

through socialising with others and forming/joining certain groups or social networks:

> *"P1:…I remember I was a bit anxious all right a little bit a bit worried*
> *about how I'd get on with people and stuff but eh, ah I knew in the end*
> *I wouldn't have much of a problem*
> *I: yeah*
> *P1: you know what I mean I wouldn't, I quickly figured out who were*
> *the people I wanted to hang around with and who weren't, I'd be*
> *friendly with them" (P1)*

12.5.1.3. 'Feeling Anxious' to 'Getting by'

A minority of participants described still feeling somewhat anxious in the

university context at time two, or at least that they had not achieved a state of feeling

comfortable in the university context. In the following illustrative quote P19 describes

herself as being more comfortable at time two than she had been at time one, but also

as still experiencing fear at being in "the deep end" where things were happening too

fast for her to feel completely comfortable:

> *"P19: …you have no time to yourself and I'm working at the weekend*
> *as well so it's like seven days a week on the go*
> *I: is it different from now when you look back on the start of the year*
> *P19: yeah I'm more comfortable now like it was really intimidating*
> *when I was coming in you know and to find out what is expected of you*
> *and now you know what is expected of you like emmm, are you going*
> *to live up to standards that you've set for yourself and the ones that*

others expect of you as well it's really hard, it's hard to find a middle ground that you're comfortable with and there's so much going on at the moment being on placement and then coming back for lectures and then having exams it just seems like everything is going quickly because it's nearly summer and with placement it's like you're thrown in the deep end like we were on placement last October and it was just observational and you weren't allowed do anything but now you're expected to do things so, it's good I really do enjoy it but at the same time you're afraid" (P19)

12.5.2. Perceived Landmarks or Milestones between Time One and Time Two

Time two interviews captured participants' perception of their progression, in the university context, from time one to time two. Participants perceived this progression as either a gradual progression or as a progression characterised by significant moments, landmarks or milestones that changed how they perceived themselves. The majority of participants described landmarks or milestones that had their identity and their progression from time one to time two:

"I: and in terms of the difference between the start of the year and now has it been a gradual process to get from one to the other or have there been immediately changes
P9: yeah yeah actually it's been there's been leaps just like epiphanies moments just out of the blue" (P9)

12.5.2.1. The Experience of and Feedback from Assignments and Exams

The experience of completing assignments, sitting exams and receiving results of academic work were described as being important turning points for many participants. The findings presented here are divided between the participants from university one and university two, as participants from university one had assignments and official exams in the forth month (January) of their first academic year. The participants from university two had assignments and possibly class tests but would not experience formal university examinations until the end of the academic year:

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a) University one

> *"P26: I had always had it in my head that yeah this is good but I wonder if I'll get my exams so they confirmed that what I'd been feeling was right it was the final confirmation...but the overall thing is that I know now I can handle this and I can handle it the way I'm going about it" (P26)*

For one participant the exams provided feedback that led her to make the decision to

exit the university context:

> *"I: and was that decision that came on all at once or was it a gradual thing or was there a moment where you went all right this is it now*
> *P5: there was a moment when I said so that's it now and it was emm at Christmas after the exams I felt that I had put in a lot of work into this and I didn't do so well, as well as I had expected and ehhh also when I went into the exams I just froze it was like going back in time going back in the years…this was suppose to be fun you know, and that's where I kind of said well for the second semester I'm going to work as much as I can if I get it I get it if not…and that's when I applied to* (name of college) *because I thought that would be more enjoyable…and the pressure down there wouldn't be as much with just having two subjects each year, I felt nine subjects was too much, especially when you haven't been at school in years and years" (P5)*

b) University two

> *"I: and what kind of academic feedback did you have coming to you in the college before you left*
> *P33: a page here and there a few sentences not very much feedback now if you did want to go to them and talk to them I'm sure it was available I never did but I didn't get much feedback*
> *I: and did you have many exams*
> *P33: we had no exams we just had a few assignments*
> *I: and was that feedback positive*
> *P33: it was if you got your honour or whatever and in terms of seeing what everyone else got so if I was falling in the middle it was positive for me" (P33)*

At time two P31 discussed the experience of receiving feedback from in-class tests:

> *P31: yeah they were all good like getting back the results back after Christmas and one was sixty percent which was pretty low I thought I knew more but it was fairly positive emm, but no there's no major exams there's only the end of year exams and there's another batch of*

those tests coming up in the last two weeks of the month and then all the essays are due so I think that'll be a good gauge of how I'm doing when I get the results of those tests because you know yourself" (P31)

The definitive gauge of P31's self-perceived process in the university context is still, at time two, placed in the future, where it is dependent on how the participant perceives their success in future tests, assignments and exams.

c) Christmas break as a chance for self-reflection

One participant (P31) described the Christmas break as a period here he was able to self-reflect on his perception of the university context and change his goals:

"I: and has getting happier been a slow gradual process from earlier in the year to now
P31: yeah
I: or have there been any big things happen that affected how you felt that impacted on you
P31: no I think it was eh, the break at Christmas really helped me to clear my head and think about a load of stuff and then since then it's just really getting, eh not hugely better but just gradually getting better like after I just came back after Christmas things were pretty good and then I had a poor test result and that really made me re-analyze the priorities in college because it didn't matter that I went to all the lecturers and took all the notes the fact that I didn't study quite right for the test so I just re-evaluated the goals for that so yeah basically the Christmas holidays and immediately after that was when things got better" (P31)

Participants from university one were less likely to have the opportunity to utilise the Christmas break to self-reflect as they had to prepare for their official exams in January:

"P17: now I'm in college I can't you know go anywhere that's why I'm not going away at Christmas because apparently (name of university) *has exams after Christmas, who thought that up*
I: I don't know somebody
P17: yeah somebody who who, doesn't like Christmas" (P17)

12.5.3. Inter-personal Milestones

Certain inter-personal interactions were also described as being landmarks or milestones in the participants' academic year to date, both on a horizontal level (with other students) and, for a minority of participants, a vertical level (with other types of organisational member such as lecturers) within the university context:

a) horizontal level

> *"I: so any other big landmarks or anything*
> *P26: well I suppose I won't say big things but small things like getting up and doing presentations in front of the class and working in groups and that, that's all running along and you're developing these relationships slowly and surely" (P26)*

b) vertical level

> *"I: and was there anything else during the year any major events of the last few months that would have influenced your thinking maybe in terms of academia or how you felt about college or something like that*
> *P33: well there was a difference between some lecturers some lecturers make you feel great and you wanted to go to their classes and others just there over your head and when they left the class you'd say what were they on about so teachers have an influence" (P33)*

12.5.4. A Perceived Gradual Progression from Time One to Time Two

A minority of participants described a gradual progression from time one to time two:

> *"I: so looking at the move from the start of the year to now I mean has it been a gradual thing, like in the changes we've been looking at has there been a gradual change or have there been any big events or moments or milestones that might have brought how you felt about the year forward*
> *P12: no I think it just slowly progressed to here there weren't any dramatic events this is just the way it panned out" (P12)*

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A minority of participants described a gradual progression with some significant moments (landmarks/milestones), that occurred between time one and time two, especially the exams and feedback from assignments and exams:

> *"P17: I think it's been gradual there has been an adjustment definitely it was very difficult in the first couple of weeks emm I think getting over the first exams I think was huge for me… it's been steady no big thing no not that I can think of" (P17)*

12.4.2. 'Being a Worker' to 'Being a Mature Student'

A small number of participants continued the 'being a worker' to 'being a mature student' narrative at time two. These participants, at time two, described feeling happy with their change from 'being a worker' to 'being a mature student' and described their worker identity as being more in the past than it had been at time one:

> *"P15:…I would say work would have faded more into the background because*
> *I: is it more just college*
> *P15: it's more just college*
> *I: yeah*
> *P15: I mean my relationship with work now is purely social and purely, because they are paying for my course, emm it's purely keeping in touch you know I have to send my exam results that sort of thing" (P15)*

12.5.6. 'Being a Homemaker/Parent' to 'Being a Mature Student'

Four participants (all female) continued the 'being a homemaker/parent' to 'being a mature student' narrative. Two participants described how they felt happy with their change from 'being a homemaker/parent' to 'being a mature student', while

the other two participants described how they still wished to prioritise their identity as a homemaker/parent over their new identity as a mature student:

12.5.6.1. Moving Away from the Homemaker/Parent Identity

In the following illustrative quote P17 discusses having to leave behind, to a certain extent, her identity as a homemaker/parent in order to fully engage with her identity as a mature student:

> *"P17: …I had a lot of readjustments to do emm I couldn't do it all I couldn't keep I couldn't continue to like keep the house the same as it was I couldn't continue to cook every day I just couldn't do it and eh I found that I was getting very tired and you know I wasn't concentrating and everything so I had to I had to try and change my family's perception of me you know and so you know just because I have a womb doesn't mean that I'm the only one that can cook and that sort of thing and they do really try they really do and the house is just filthy so who cares like it was never like that but you just prioritise don't you because I want to do this and I want to do it well so I don't care*
> *I: yeah*
> *P17: so I think that's the difference and I was trying then to do it all you know to fix everything but you can't do it" (P17)*

12.5.6.2. Family Context still seen as the Priority

P29, at time two, still saw her family identity and her engagement with the family context as what should take top priority in her life, and perceived a conflict between this perception and the time consuming nature of her involvement with the university context:

> *"P29: I was never one for saying I don't have time for this or I don't have time for that I used to say well why don't they make the time and now I find it very hard to manage my time, like my time is very slotted now because I'm here and then I'll go home and I'll cook and I'll clean and maybe read the paper and then I have work to do and when I come into college then I'm tired you know and I've two children at home at the moment well adult children and my husband and I find at times I'd*

barely have time to talk to him you know…I'm trying to keep family first but education is kind of taking over" (P29)

12.5.7. Exiting the University Context but Retaining the Student Identity

Three participants (P5, P21 and P33), at time two, had either exited or were in the process of exiting the university context. However, all three wished to maintain their identity as a mature student. P5 decided to leave university one after having a negative experience during and after the official exams, and due to her placing her family context above her commitment to remaining in the university context in her order of importance. However, she wished to maintain her identity as a mature student and complete her goal of getting a third level qualification by transferring to another educational institution:

> *"P5: there was a moment when I said so that's it now and it was emm at Christmas after the exams I felt that I had put in a lot of work into this and I didn't do so well…and that's when I applied to (name of college) because I thought that would be more enjoyable, more enjoyable*
> *I: that the hours down there would be less*
> *P5: yeah and the pressure down there wouldn't be as much with just having two subjects each year, I felt nine subjects was too much, especially when you haven't been at school in years and years" (P5)*

P21 had already decided that she had chosen the wrong academic course at time one and was in the process of exiting the context at that time. At time two she had maintained, with some difficulty, her wish to return to university one to attend a different academic course:

> *"P21: I had just had to withdraw from the course emm I wasn't doing anything I was in limbo I wasn't working everything was up in the air there was no structure I felt like there was no structure to my life after being here for a few weeks I felt like I needed some structure but now I'm back working for a few hours a week I didn't go back to study I did*

look at a few courses and I did consider a few but in the end I never went for anything emm I've sort of come back around…I'm getting back into that frame of mind back where I was this time last year I had lost it at bit in the last few weeks I had sort of lost sight of the reasons for coming back to do the degree, because the teaching hours that I have are great but the problems I have are more to do with the structure of class and the module I'm teaching than anything else but I know now this is what I want to do, and even just there while ago I passed some of the people I was in class with and I know I do want to do this" (P21)

P33, at time two, was in the process of exiting university two due to external issues to do with her employer, which were beyond her control. However, she intended to continue, in some way, her pursuit of a third level qualification that would facilitate her career goals:

"I: so in terms of looking forward then to the future is it going to be possible for you to continue
P33: it's not, I'm hoping to get year one done now if I can pass the exams and then hopefully I can move colleges and keep studying and like did do diplomas and by night before so if they were taken into consideration I might get credits and that would make it easier" (P33)

"the big thing is that when I was talking to you before I didn't really see where I was going in the subject there was no purpose behind it but now I really can see a path going forward I really really want to now" (P33)

12.5.8. 12.4.1.3. 'On the Path' to Completion of a *Personal Mission*

The two participants who constructed themselves, at time one, as being focused on the fulfilment of a specific personal goal or mission, which held great meaning for them, continued to construct these narratives at time two, although they were tempered by the fact that the participants were having to deal with the practical, day-to-day issues related to being in university:

"I: like in terms of the fact that you weren't just in college to get an education there was sort of a mission
P38: yeah there was

I: is that present all the time
P38: yeah the purpose still stands and all that and kind of eh you have
to, back then I would have been concentrating more on the future
I: yeah
P38: idealistically like looking at the future but now it's more you have
to be realistic in the present
I: get down to the nitty gritty
P38: yeah you have to get down to the nitty gritty to get down to that
stuff in the future" (P38)

12.6. Summary

This chapter has presented research findings relating to the overarching narratives produced by the participants in their interviews at time one and time two of the research study. These narratives were used by the participants to maintain the coherency and consistency of their identity-portfolio throughout the identity-creation process. At time one the participants attempted to produce a seamless narrative of how they 'came to be' a mature student in the university context by beginning narratives in their past and then discussing their 'path' to university until they could discuss the present by including their recent arrival in university in their narrative. At time two these narratives were reconstructed in order to include the period between time one and time two such that the participant narratives would accurately fit the participants' self-perceptions at that time. Once again this allowed the participants to produce a coherent and consistent story about how they 'came to be', or did not successfully become, a mature student at time two of the research study. This gave meaning to the participants' sense of themselves.

In the next chapter results relating to the participants descriptions of how they managed their identity-portfolio on a day-to-day basis during the process of creating a new, context-specific-identity will be presented.

13. Identity-management during a

Period of Identity-creation

13.1. The Position of Chapter Thirteen within Section B
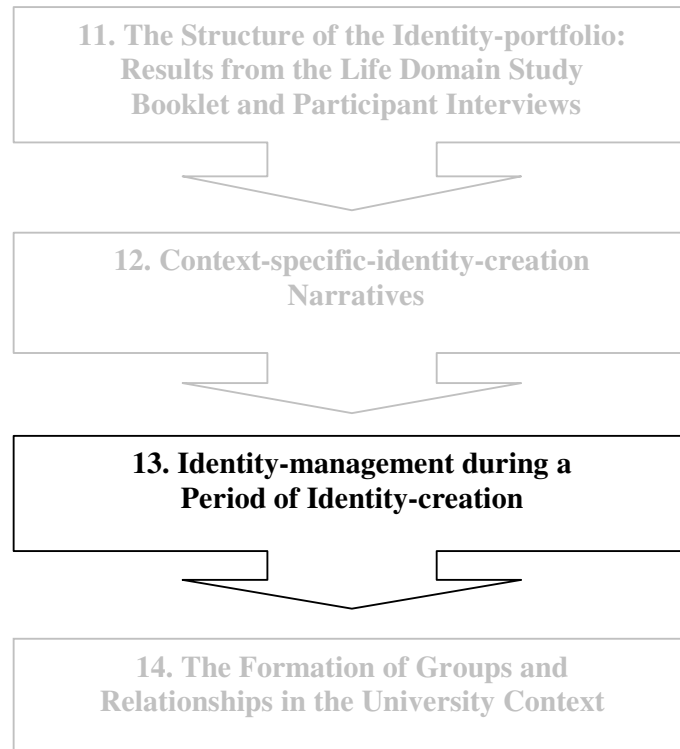
Figure 73. The structure of section B: Chapter thirteen. Identity-management during a period of identity-creation

Chapter twelve presented research findings relating to participants' overarching identity-creation narratives. Chapter thirteen presents research results related to the way in which the participants engaged in identity-management processes on a daily, or at least regular, basis during the period of identity-creation described in the narratives of chapter twelve (see figure 73).

13.2. The Structure of Chapter Thirteen

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│       13.3. Proactive Preparations       │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            13.4. Facilitators            │
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│        13.5. Sources of Difficulty       │
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│  13.6. Overcoming Difficulties related to│
│            Identity-management           │
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│             13.7. Summary                │
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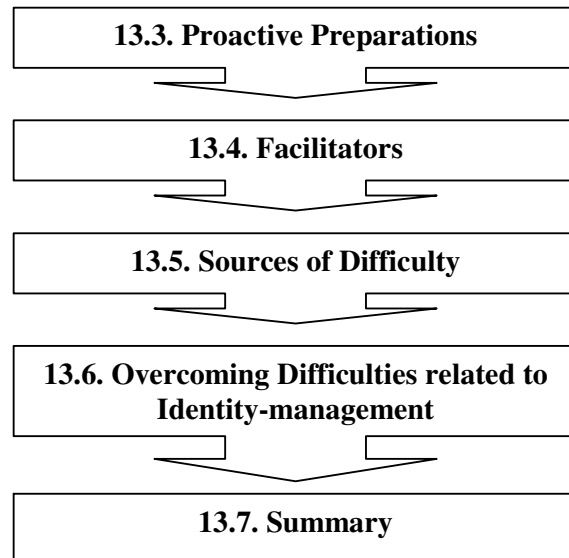
Figure 74. The structure of chapter thirteen

In this chapter (see figure 74) participant constructions of their day-to-day, or at least regular, engagement in identity-management processes are presented. With regard to sub-question three of the research question, the research findings presented in this chapter illustrate how the participants' day-to-day identity-management was affected by the participants' involvement in a process of identity-creation. Four main issues emerged from the analysis of data relating to the participants engagement in identity-management processes. These were: the proactive preparations the participants made in order to try and get their lives running smoothly; what they perceived as facilitating them in their efforts to have their lives running smoothly; what hampered them or made things difficult in these efforts; and lastly if and how they attempted to resolve these difficulties (see figure 75). Due to the high level of overlap in the emergence of these four main issues between time one and time two

Proactive Preparations:

-Influence of 'becoming a
mature student' on day-to-day
Proactive preparations

-Strategies
        -Planning/Organising
        -Organised yet Flexible
        -Organise by Priority
        -Keeping Things Separate
        -Keeping Things Close Together
        -Manage People

Facilitators:
-Money
-Support
-Physical and Temporal Factors
-Flexible Mindset

Degree of perceived
dissonance
experienced by the
participant

**Overcoming Difficulties related to Identity-
management:**
-Flexibility
-Take a Step Back
-Choose Top Priority
-Avoidance
-Confrontation
-Keep things Close Together
-Struggle Through it
-No Solution

Sources of Difficulty:
-Lack of Control
-Lack of Time
-Interpersonal Difficulties
-Internal Difficulties
-Clash of Two (or more) Important Contexts in a
  Participant's Life
-Money

Figure 75. Identity-management processes during a period of Identity-creation

the results from both times will be presented together. Where there is a significant temporal element in participants' descriptions of a given issue this will be highlighted.

13.3. Proactive Preparations

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│      13.5. Sources of Difficulty      │
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│  13.6. Overcoming Difficulties related to │
│         Identity-management           │
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│           13.7. Summary               │
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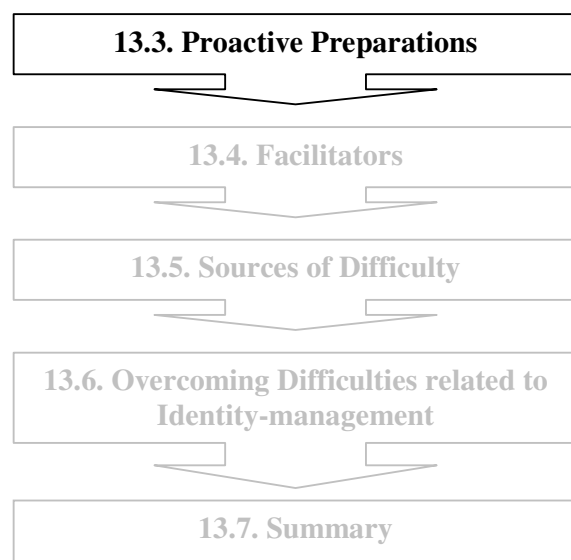
Figure 76. The structure of chapter thirteen: 13.3. Proactive preparations

Many participants described how they proactively prepared their lives on a daily basis in order to get things running smoothly (see figure 76). This was often described as not being an easy task as many participants had numerous different parts of their lives to which they had to attend:

> *"P1: …sometimes like I have an awful lot on because I have so many different groups of friends I've got my boyfriend I've got my parents that I go out with separately as well as go out with together and there's a family buzz but there's also my mum and me we have our own little buzz when we go out you know once every week or once every two weeks, like so, and then I have like aunts and stuff who all just want to see me like (laugh) you know it's just like I want a night off! Leave me alone, yeah sometimes it's ridiculous sometimes I'm actually jaded like and I haven't got a night off at all for myself*
> *I: so is that the kind of preparation that you take just not take you know just give up on nights off*

P1: yeah, only you see most of the time I love having a full diary like but em, sometimes you're like oh jesus I just want to sit down for an hour you know" (P1)

13.3.1. Influence of 'Becoming a Mature Student' on Day-to-day Proactive Preparations

Time One

When the participants had recently entered the university as mature students they were still engaged in the identity-creation process of becoming mature students, yet they also had to immediately incorporate their larger move to university life into their day-to-day identity-management. There was an interaction between these two processes where any proactive preparation the participants had engaged in for the larger, once off, move to becoming a mature student had an influence on how able the participant was to proactively prepare for including their mature student identity into their life on a day-to-day basis:

> *"I would have, had a pretty, emmm major role within a political party which was voluntary, which has gone I mean I shed all that in preparation to come back to college*
> *I: yeah*
> *P20: you know since last January I kept saying no and no and no and no I mean the brief was finishing up in the summer time but to other briefs it was no...if I hadn't done that I would be in chaos at the moment because I'd be out two nights a week and I'd be exhausted and have too many other things to do" (P20)*

Time Two

The experience the participant's gained, between time one and time two of the research study, with regard to the university context had an effect on their ability to proactively prepare their lives on a daily basis in order to get things running smoothly:

"I: and at the moment are you doing things to prepare yourself for moving between the parts of you life and getting everything running smoothly
P26: the preparations are the key to it all is running my life in college efficiently being in here on time having my study time and just getting it all done, and arranging it so that I'm travelling off peak, everything else kind of fits in around that then I've plenty of space within that to move around then and take care of domestic issues and my personal time it's just been a bit more structured about my time here like in October I didn't know what way my time should be going I hadn't a picture of how lectures were going to go or anything I think I can see that now" (P26)

13.3.2. Strategies

Through the participants' constructions of their day-to-day proactive preparations they described using certain proactive strategies in their attempts at organisation.

13.3.2.1. Planning/Organising

The majority of those participants who described themselves as using proactive preparation strategies described using planning or organising techniques to achieve this:

"I: and are there things that you're doing at the moment to prepare yourself to try and get everything running smoothly
P24: yeah the goals and I try not to leave things to the last minute I don't like doing that anyway if something is given to me I have to get it done I have to get things done ahead of time not leave everything to the last minute because there will be more assignments coming just stuff like that
I: so having a plan
P24: yeah" (P24)

However, some participants saw themselves as being organised at a suboptimal level:

> *"I: and at the moment are you doing things to try and prepare things for yourself in order to get things running smoothly*
> *P23: I try to prepare things but I would generally never get around to doing it you know that kind of way I try to be a lot more organised but I'm not and it might work for one day and then it's gone back to mayhem the next day, I do try it to become more organised but it generally just doesn't happen" (P23)*

Participant's context-specific-identities, in terms of their overt management of who they have to be in particular contexts affected the participants' proactive preparation. In the following quote P36 describe how the psychological changes from one 'way of being' to another can occur before or during the physical move from one context to the other:

> *"you have to psych yourself up like I, after my tutorial now this evening I'll go home, it's an hour on the bus so you psych yourself up like who's working who's doing what why are they home are they supposed to be home and I have to keep all this in my head so that I'll be prepared for any eventuality when I get in the door like… and I kind of have to emmm change my mind from college mode to home mode and I can't be waffling on about projects and assignments they don't seem to get it like that I have to spend so much time thinking about these things like emmm but yeah it's the same thing then coming back on a Sunday you have to change put in a new brain like" (P36)*

13.3.2.2. Organised yet Flexible

In the following illustrative quote one can see the use of an 'organised yet flexible' approach to proactive preparation, where participants' described being organised but also feeling that it was necessary to be ready to "roll this the punches" if necessary:

"I: …can you think of anything that you do because there are lots of people who don't have that at all
P12: I think it's just being organised and having a plan laid out
I: yeah
P12: and being flexible as well, yeah I think just being really flexible, and adapting to different situations not being kind of set in one structure if I have to go to college for one hour meet this person for one hour just letting it all blend in letting it go with the flow, that's what I do anyway
I: so organisation but then roll with the punches as well
P12: exactly like be organised, have a master plan but have so much room for adaptation in the middle of it I mean know where you want to go but if things happen along the way like it's going to happen" (P12)

13.3.2.3. Organise by Priority

A proactive strategy described by participants was that of organising their life according to how important they saw each context in their life at a particular time:

"I: and in terms of managing all these parts of your life and getting everything running smoothly what at the moment is making your life easier and what is making your life more difficult
P22: emmm it is hard at the moment to do everything properly so I've had to just prioritise what needs to be done properly and at the moment what needs to be prioritised is the study and the athletics so if in a toss up if the study is necessary for an upcoming MCQ or a midterm or something I will drop the athletics because the study is just a top priority and it revolves around those two emm what needs to be done and what can I do" (P22)

13.3.2.4. Keeping Things Separate

Segregating certain contexts from each other, psychologically (and perhaps physically and/or temporally) was also described as being a proactive, identity-management strategy. This can be seen in the following illustrative quotes where participants describe how they attempt to keep separate or segregate the home/family context and the university context from one another:

"P17:…it's lovely to close the door on something and be refreshed in a new thing and when you come back it's all it's fine you know so I mean for instance I'm in college now I've closed the door on the house and the family and anything else because my cell phone is off my cell phone is off I am now I can't be found so that's how I switch that off and eh I eh you have my full attention ok when I go home I could also switch my phone off because then somebody else needs my full attention
I: yeah
P17: and that's what I do
I: so it's kind of eh
P17: boxes
I: separate them yeah
P17: yeah I can separate them I find it eh I find it helpful to renew because friends are very tiring family can be very tiring and eh, so you need to escape a little bit to close them off and that and anyway you're never really a benefit to people if you're not completely in there"
(P17)

13.3.2.5. Keeping Things Close Together

Other participants expressed a preference for integrating contexts, psychologically (and perhaps physically and/or temporally). These participants described feeling that they were the same person in all the contexts in their life. No description of this strategy was found at time two, therefore this data originates from time one of the research study:

"I:…can you think of anything you do in terms of preparing to go from one place to another that makes it so easy because that is an important thing
P19: like my attitude or something, no no I would be the same person you know going into any of these places, there's nothing you know that stops me being myself in each area and I feel very comfortable that I can be myself to an extent
I: so literally between all these places there is no, no real perceivable difference in the type of persona you were using the type of person you are
P19: no, I think one good thing about me is that I am very easy-going and comfortable enough to not change wherever I am, like they tend to merge as well like the voluntary work and friends I met some friends through this voluntary work so that makes me the same person in these different settings" (P19)

13.3.2.6. Manage People

There were also participant descriptions regarding how they proactively managed their day-to-day affairs through managing their relationships with other people within the different contexts perceived as existing in their lives, but especially in terms of interactions with their families:

> *"I: if I said what you do to, to prepare yourself for moving do you do*
> *anything to try and make things not get all complicated*
> *P23: probably be a bit nicer at home when I need a baby sitter you*
> *know like do something around the house (laugh) just things like that*
> *and eh, I'm just a lot nicer when I need something that sounds really*
> *bad when I need to be but, I'm generally quite nice at home anyway,*
> *emm yeah I'd just be a bit nicer,*
> *I: so maybe just manage the relationships with people like*
> *P23: yeah, yeah especially the family, mmm" (P23)*

13.4. Facilitators

Analysis of participant data revealed a number of factors that facilitate the participant's identity-management (see figure 77) during the period in which they were creating a new context-specific-identity.
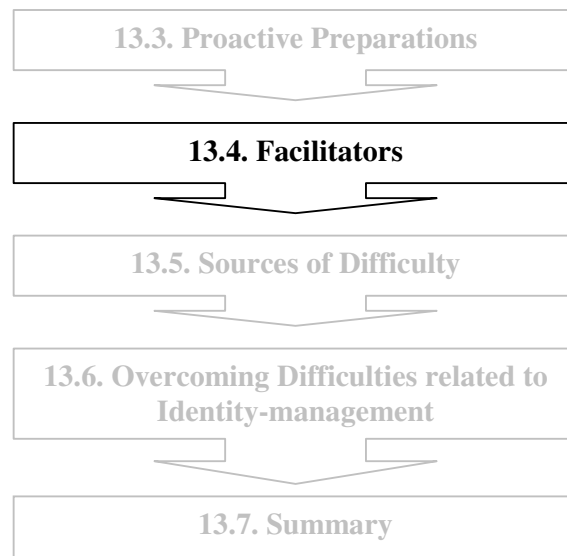
Figure 77. The structure of chapter thirteen: 13.4. Facilitators

13.4.1. Money

Financial security, or at least the absence of financial insecurity, was described by participants as something that facilitated their activities in many or all the contexts in their lives:

> *"you know life is very good it's probably too good to a certain extent I suppose the easiest part of my life is I don't have to work I don't feel that pressure at all financially I'm quite secure eh I would consider that I have a much better life than I have ever had really" (P20)*

13.4.2. Support

The most frequently cited facilitator was the support the participants received from individuals in their life, whether this was from family, friends or significant others:

> *"P35:…my friends a couple of my friends my close friends they know how important this is to me you know to just kind of you know like my friend rings me up every day and asks me how things were going like I was having a bad day yesterday and she knew that I was having a bad day and she was just trying to comfort me and tell me there's not much time left in the year and she just went if you give up now you will be really pissed off with yourself so yeah" (P35)*

13.4.3. Physical and Temporal Factors

The physical distance between the different contexts in a participant's life was often described as being an issue with regard to identity-management. In these cases the temporal and physical element of travelling between certain or all the contexts in the participant's life was perceived as being a facilitator of the psychological task of identity-management:

"I: emmm are there any issues for you in your life about sort of physical distance or maybe time related to physical distance between the different parts of your life that might make it things tougher you know
P1: no I'm five minutes from college I'm three minutes from my boyfriend I live with my da my ma is five minutes up the road
I: so it's all nice
P1: it's all nice, it's all in like a mile circumference
I: that doesn't get to you no
P1: no" (P1)

In the above example physical and temporal factors were seen as facilitating identity-management because different contexts were physically close together. The next illustrative quote described physical and temporal factors as facilitating identity-management because there was a significant physical distance between two contexts, which allowed a space to emerge in which the participant could engage in an enjoyable activity:

"I: and are there any issues of physical distance or time between different places
P16: no not really
I: the commute doesn't kill you or anything
P16: no the commute is great because you get a chance to read you're kind of hoping you don't meet anyone on the bus
I: and is that a method of preparing yourself for college
P16: ah yeah but if you're sitting beside and you're talking about the hurling match or whatever then you can't whip out your book" (P16)

At time two some participants described how they had overcome earlier, perceived physical and temporal difficulties regarding the management of their daily lives:

"I: yeah, has it become more just ingrained in the day-to-day now the travelling
P6: the travelling is grand it's going like clockwork really, it took a while to adapt to it but this term it seems a lot easier
I: yeah
P6: a lot of things are easier this term ehh, and I hope that's not self delusion the travelling is definitely easier I think a lot of the, I've adapted to the systems here to the routine you know" (P6)

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13.4.4. Flexible Mindset

Identity-management was also facilitated by the mindset with which some participants approached the management of their daily affairs. Some participants identified themselves as people who were open and flexible with regard to how they engaged in identity-management, and hence often described themselves as perceiving that they have a high level of control over the different contexts in their lives:

> *"P15:…that's what I intend to do and whatever slips I'll catch up on at home*
> *I: mmm, so I mean nothing is clashing that much or, eh*
> *P15: not that I feel is pressurising me*
> *I: yeah*
> *P15: I can cope with what's going on, but, and I I'm not emm, what shall we say I'm not downing anybody who's been at home working as a homemaker*
> *I: yeah*
> *P15: but I am used to juggling*
> *I: yeah yeah more practice*
> *P15: so it's not as big an issue for me as some people" (P15)*

At time two some participants described having become more flexible in terms of their own self-conceptions, in comparison with earlier parts of the year:

> *"the only way I'd look at things being easier is that I'm adapted to things better, I'm kind of adjusted and used to things better things are for me running a lot smoother I'm a lot more clear in my own mind*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: so therefore everything kind of slots into place after that" (P3)*

13.5. Sources of Difficulty

Having previously presented research findings relating to factors that eased participant engagement in identity-management processes this subsection will present results relating to difficulties participants experienced with regard to identity-
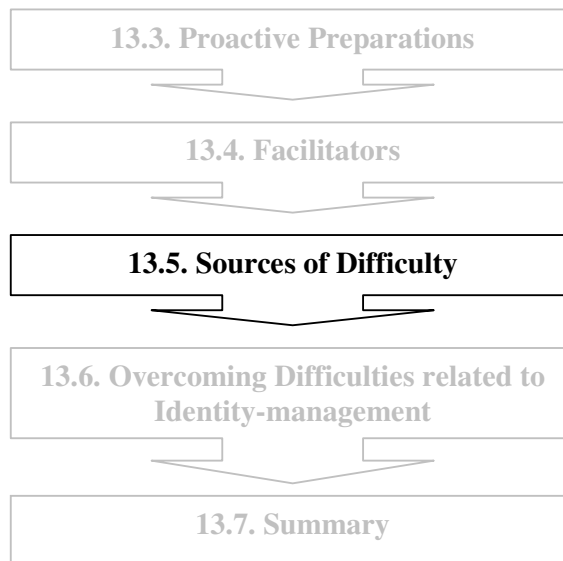
Figure 78. The structure of chapter thirteen: 13.5. Sources of difficulty

management (see figure 78). Several factors were identified by the participants that hampered them in their attempts at effective identity-management on a daily or at least regular basis.

13.5.1. Lack of control

Perceived lack of control over certain, or all, contexts in a participant's life was described as contributing to difficulties within the participants' lives. This was associated with a perceived inability to effectively engage in identity-management, for example engaging in planning and preparing activities. Examples given by the participants of settings where this lack of control existed included work contexts:

> *"I: are there any issues of physical distance or time between where these places are in terms of making things easier or more difficult*
> *P12: well work at the odd time with the agency because I don't know where they're going to send me so between getting to work and college it can be a bit of a time barrier, but that's the only thing everything else is kind of close to me" (P12)*

And also the university contexts:

"P35:…when I was working I did not have a problem I went to work I had my money I had time for my family and friends and you know what I've been looking at myself over the last week going what they hell am I doing I just threw study in and now it's like wow I've totally lost control of my life I'm getting it back now a small bit but I never thought it would be this hard" (P35)

13.5.2. Lack of Time (Physical and Temporal Factors)

The most frequently cited source of perceived difficulties, within the participant's lives, was time. Time was construed as something many of the participants felt they were constantly battling with:

"I: so in terms of managing all the bits and pieces and getting everything running smoothly what at the moment is making things easier or more difficult to have things running smoothly
P35: what would make things easier to make things run smoothly
I: well
P35: add two days onto the week (laugh)" (P35)

Some participants described their lives as including contexts that were extremely time-consuming, which increased the likelihood of conflict occurring:

"I: and at the moment are you taking part in any activities in the college outside of course time and lecture time
P2: not really because I'm working so much I'm working twenty thirty hours a week so just like there's no time
I: so basically if you're not in college you're
P2: in work yeah or at home (laugh) you know what I mean so I'm not eh I eh next year I hope to join the publications society and get some things published, and I do feel guilty that I didn't do that this year but I didn't have time I have to work but hopefully next year it should be easier" (P2)

Time pressure was often construed by participants as something that led them to have to prioritise certain contexts in their life over others. In the following illustrative

quotes, from time one and time two, participants describe such prioritising, due to perceived time pressures:

Time One

> *"I: and in terms of the parts of your life here do any of those parts clash with each other*
> *P20: eh probably just in terms of friends I probably don't have as much time for them since I worked in town and it was easy to meet people after work*
> *I: yeah*
> *P20: whereas now I have to make the effort to go into town*
> *I: yeah*
> *P20: now I'm only in week three and I've said to everybody give me a couple of weeks till I settle down" (P20)*

Time Two

> *"I: so what's the difference now*
> *P24: it's just the workload really, the workload is completely different now my objectives have changed*
> *I: from what to what*
> *P24: at the start of the year I had more time on my hands for friends and family and I could give work more time as well you know but I cant now so I have to divide my time down more so it's just not possible to do everything at once" (P24)*

Time pressure was construed as a cause of experiencing a lack of energy in many or all of the contexts in a participant's life, resulting in goals not being accomplished in these contexts:

> *"P9: what would make it easier, more time a few extra hours in the day you know emm or just overall more time spent with my family for instance more time spent at home without studying I mean the place is just a mess it needs a clean you know but I never have time I'd come home and go to bed knackered ahh I'll hoover tomorrow or whatever yeah so more time spent on each thing so I'm really bad with time management you know and I'll sit there and just be worried about another thing and end up with nothing done yeah I would just need to spend more time on… it's just a question of learning time management and study skills and so on which is probably the truth but I'm one of these procrastinators who put everything on the proverbial long finger" (P9)*

Experiencing a 'lack of time' was also described as being the cause of a reduction in the amount of time spent, by participants, in activities related to self-reflection, or in having 'time for oneself':

> *"P2:…I've noticed now because of the week that's been in it I've been*
> *a bit like been running to work and doing all sorts of different things*
> *so I haven't had time to be like that*
> *I: hmmm*
> *P2: to have time to myself" (P2)*

Physical distance was also identified as a difficulty by the participants. This source of difficulty was closely intertwined with the concept of time as a difficulty. The physical distance between the contexts in the participants' lives, which they traversed on a daily, or at least regular, basis was seen as impairing their ability to engage in identity-management:

> *"I: and in terms of activities outside of coursework and lecturer-time*
> *are you taking part in anything*
> *P25: no, no eh that though is down to time and the distance between*
> *here and home so I can't really when I finish it takes at least an hour*
> *to get home so I'm trying to beat traffic because if I wait till five it'll*
> *take two hours so that takes time out of when I should be doing what I*
> *should be doing and last week there was a mature student thing on last*
> *week and I didn't get to it mostly because it was on at 6 and I was*
> *finished at 3 so I just went home, I would love to go to some things but*
> *sometimes I just can't I have to get home" (P25)*

Those participants who described using public transport sometimes perceived themselves as being disadvantaged in terms of not having control over the timing of their transport:

> *"I: and in terms of moving between the different parts are there any*
> *issues of physical distance or the time between different parts of your*
> *life that would make it easier or difficult for moving between*
> *P6: you say like physical distance you mean like travel*
> *I: well yeah*
> *P6: emm well I currently commute for college which can, which I'm*
> *quite surprised it's not a very set variable it does seem to involve emm,*

negotiation almost on a day-to-day thing because I travel by public transport" (P6)

13.5.3. Interpersonal Difficulties

Interpersonal difficulties were also identified as a source of difficulty with regard to identity-management. These difficulties involved interpersonal relationships in general, a particular person or a group of people:

> *"P13:…I don't like confrontation I don't like, I just don't like the way people make you feel sometimes you know*
> *I: yeah*
> *P13: so I'd probably just take the easy way out and drop out of because I know there's only one week it's do-able like*
> *I: so the social side of the class is making things harder*
> *P13: yeah I wish I'd gotten in with a different group at the start of the year if only I had have known what I know now you know what I mean and there's one big loudmouth and she'd wreck the head she drives me nuts and she can turn everyone against you she's turned everyone against me like everyone in that whole mature student group mature as in like you don't do this shit when you're in college so if she could be gone like it would make things so much easier*
> *I: so in terms of specific people*
> *P13: she's very domineering yeah" (P13)*

Examples of individuals with whom the participants described having difficulties were the fathers of the participant's child/children (where the participants were single mothers):

> *"I: and if I said are there any people in your life that make it easier or difficult are there*
> *P13: her dad*
> *I: yeah*
> *P13: (laugh) there's only one person who makes things difficult and that's her father" (P13)*

The participant's family:

> *"P36: well in the case of my family I'm not counting my dad we moved out two years ago from our house because he's an alcoholic and we couldn't live with him anymore so when I talk in terms of my family I'm talking about my mom and my sister we all live in a rented house*

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without him so I mean he has people to look after him whereas my mother has me because my sister is useless ammm
I: are you the eldest
P36: no but my brother is a bit useless as well he's away doing his own thing so it kind of falls on me to organise so I have to juggle that as well as coming here like" (P36)

Particularly the participant's children:

"P15:...my main problem is my eighteen year old in that he's eighteen he's doing his leaving next year and he's just a pain he and I just clash at the moment I love him as much as I love the rest but he has middle child syndrome" (P15)

And the participant's friends:

"I: so in terms of individuals in your life are there any specific people who make things easier or more difficult
P24: well the pressure and the temptation is always there on a Friday night you know
I: so they do make it more difficult sometimes
P24: ah they do yeah" (P24)

13.5.4. Internal Difficulties

Participants identified a source of difficulty with regard to identity-management that originated within their own self-perceptions:

"P20: there's nothing that makes it hard except for my own complacency at times and then putting myself under pressure by not doing stuff early enough but I work well under pressure anyway so I would never put myself under pressure unless I knew I could handle it if you know what I mean so it's manageable but that's just laziness" (P20)

These conflicts were perceived as occurring internally, within the participant, rather than externally:

"I: are there times then when the parts clash with each other
P27: yes like last week was a very good example of when everything clashed in my head and the personal started coming out
I: yeah
P27: and my views and the way I was teaching and students then latched onto that and it ended up being too personal so I just let that

class go and the next time I was well prepared with the stuff for them
to do and I thanked them for their input and that it had been taken on
board" (P27)

Some participants, within their day-to-day lives, could not readily disengage one

'way of being' in order to engage with other contexts in their lives that required them

to 'be' a different way, when required:

> *"I: what are the things that make it easy to go from doing one thing to*
> *doing another or what would like make it harder*
> *P36: emmm, I think it's my own sense of, sort of like that I should be,*
> *in x place lets say like I should be at home with my family as opposed*
> *to being here in college*
> *I: yeah yeah*
> *P36: I thinks it's my eh but I think it's myself putting pressure on me*
> *rather than, nobody has said anything it's just because I feel maybe,*
> *maybe because of my father that I have to take over like there's no ifs*
> *or buts about it like so I think it's my own pressure I mean if I could*
> *get rid of that it would definitely be a lot easier" (P36)*

At time two P36 still described herself as feeling that she should be in one part of her

life when in another. However, instead of being worried about her family when she

was in the university context, which was the case at time one, she now worried that

she should be in the university context when she was at home with her family:

> *"I: and in terms of managing all the parts of your life at the moment*
> *what's making it easy or difficult now at the moment*
> *P36: eh time*
> *I: time*
> *P36: I don't have enough time at all, emm I don't know is it my bad*
> *management of time or what but I just don't seem to be able to get it*
> *all done at all I mean everything is done on time but not*
> *I: is that specifically to do with college*
> *P36: yeah, yeah I mean I even feel bad going home at the weekend*
> *because I should be here doing something, something constructive*
> *I: yeah*
> *P36: but I'm eh that's only something I'll have to get over like, emm, I*
> *suppose maybe it is bad management but I don't know what to do*
> *about that" (P36)*

At time two some participants described their progression from time one as having caused difficulties between how they perceived themselves in general (their general-identity) and how they perceived themselves to be within a particular part of their lives (a context-specific-identity):

> *"I: are there any issues of physical distance or the time between the different parts of your life that's making things easier or difficult*
> *P32: no, not really, well short on time and getting a little bit lazier as the year goes by I just find it harder to get up in the morning and things like that that's the biggest thing for me but no time isn't a huge factor, there's no real obstacles to things except myself" (P32)*

13.5.5. Clash of Two (or more) Important Contexts in a Participant's Life

Participants identifying two (or more) important contexts in their lives often found it hard to deal with both of them on a day-to-day basis. Many participants cited the clash between the participant's life in the university context and their life in a home context as a particular difficulty:

> *"P14:…I have a brother and he has Alzheimer's and he's younger than me and myself and my sister after give him daily attention I'm off Monday Tuesday Wednesday because I'm here but I'll be on duty Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday but it's no big deal I do it for the love of my brother and it's what you should do so I'm comfortable with that but it is hard on me with university" (P14)*

Particularly in relation to their identity, in a home context, as homemakers and/or parents:

> *"P25: well in terms of the commute it's a huge amount of time I find everybody else has their study done and I'm still driving home because it's taking the best part of three hours a day which is a lot if I had that time I'd have my study done rather than an hour and-a-half later so then that leaves me with not enough time there is no me time I have to think right what's for dinner is there a wash in the washing machine that I need to hang out or is there something in the drier like you go straight into a housekeeper mode there's no time for a transition between the two no me time in between the odd time I'd say I'm having a cup of coffee and sitting down but that would be rare, and there's always something to be done especially since I've started coming here*

and I've college work as well but then that was my own decision I've always wanted to do it so it is up to me now to work my way around that at home" (P25)

There were other perceived clashes between important contexts in participants' lives, for example between contexts related to participants' religious beliefs and social lives:

> *"P33: in terms of my friends and social activities then I have a great time if anyone was going out I would go out for a pint or two pints or whatever and that is tough then there as well because if you get very drunk that's a mortal sin in terms of the religion it would be a sin and you'd have to go to confession before you could receive again, so what would make it easier yeah if I gave up drinking that would make things easier" (P33)*

Between the university contexts and contexts related to participants' pastimes:

> *"P6: …the only thing I'm possibly worried about emm, is college activities clashing with my existing social activities, like my involvement with the band, let's say for example tomorrow the mentoring thing is going to be cutting into the band time, I don't know how long the session will run on till, emmm that would be a bit of a worry, if that was to be an ongoing thing I'm not sure how long the mentoring thing lasts for it might only be a four or six week programme where they essentially just get you up on your feet and on your way, which would be ideal I think it'd be worth giving the time, like the band isn't overly, you know we don't get a lot of gigs this time of the year anyway or definitely no the kind of gigs we do during the summer, which are primarily outdoors and linked to festivals so, that'd be my only worry there" (P6)*

For those participants who were engaged in paid employment as well as going to university, this represented a clash of important contexts:

> *"P7:…work is just crazy it's just something that is taking up a lot of my time*
> *I: and you're still doing that*
> *P7: yeah this is reading week and I haven't even opened a book yet, because work just builds up and while I'm in here so there's just a backlog of stuff" (P7)*

At time two the university context was described as clashing with participants' social lives, their relationship with their friends and their intimate relationships. As can be seen in the following quote from P3, the context-specific-identity created for the university context became as, if not more, salient than other important or previously important identities:

> *"P3: …I've built up a hell of a lot more friendships since I've come in here*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: and to be honest with you the relationship that I'm in is just kind of taking a back seat and it's like you know not being selfish about it but it's kind of time for me now*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: and that's the way it is like and I wouldn't have thought that at all now last year but that's just the way things have gone it just happened that way" (P3)*

13.5.6. Money

The participants construed money, or financial insecurity, as a source of difficulty within their lives. This identification of money as a source of difficulty was linked to participant perceptions of having a lack of control over some or all the contexts in their lives. This lack of control was described as stemming from not being able to do things due to a lack of money, or a related lack of time when the participants had to spend time working, in order to get money:

> *"I: and in terms of managing all these different parts and having everything running smoothly what are the things at the moment that are making things easier and what are the things that might be making things more difficult*
> *P2: emmm (pause) I suppose having to work is making things more difficult because for college like you have to manage your time a lot like I've three hours now I'll go and do this or I've three hours now so I'll go and do that like it's a bit of a pain*
> *I: but I suppose if you weren't working then the eh*
> *P2: yeah then the money would be in a terrible yeah so yeah you know one or the other like but you can do it like" (P2)*

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The participants who ceased working full-time to attend university or switched to working part time tended to highlight money based conflict:

> *"P20: more money maybe I mean I'm not materialistic but, you know I might panic sometimes and go jesus I'm not earning anymore"* (P20)

A lack of money was construed as being a cause of dissatisfaction with one's life or aspects of one's life:

> *"I: and what would make it* (a satisfaction score) *go up higher than this*
> *P36: oh money*
> *I: yeah*
> *P36: (laugh) yeah but sure wouldn't it all like emm oh yeah I would love to win the lotto like and emm if I did I'd probably live on campus*
> *I: mmm*
> *P36: which would be a lot easier but then emmm no I mean money would be great but like in terms of buying lunches when you're hungry grand but sure we'll do without them too when we don't have it"* (P36)

Money was described as the reason for having to work by some participants, which was, in turn, described as the reason for a lack of time to engage with the other contexts in the participant's life:

> *"P2: oh yeah like I've gone for another part-time job like and I've got Friday Saturday and Sunday off and I don't think the course is as full on as the next couple of years so I'm going to try and work as much as I can this year as well as doing my course so I'll probably be starting work, I've an interview there for customer services so if I get that then I really won't have much time to see my sisters like*
> *I: yeah*
> *P2: you know what I mean they'll have to make more of an effort to come see me, or I don't know maybe meet them in town for lunch something like that, and getting home as well to* (name of Irish County) *would be quite difficult, but emmm it has to be done (laugh) rent has to be paid you know"* (P2)

At time two the university context itself, or at least being in the university context, was linked with difficulties related to money:

"I: and is anything making things harder at the moment
P24: well financially like coming to college is proving expensive even
just textbooks like seventy quid for a textbook you were kind of saying
to yourself when the fees are paid that's it but that's only the start and
every difference semester it's a different book and you don't even end
up using them stuff like that" (P24)

13.6. Overcoming Difficulties related to Identity-management
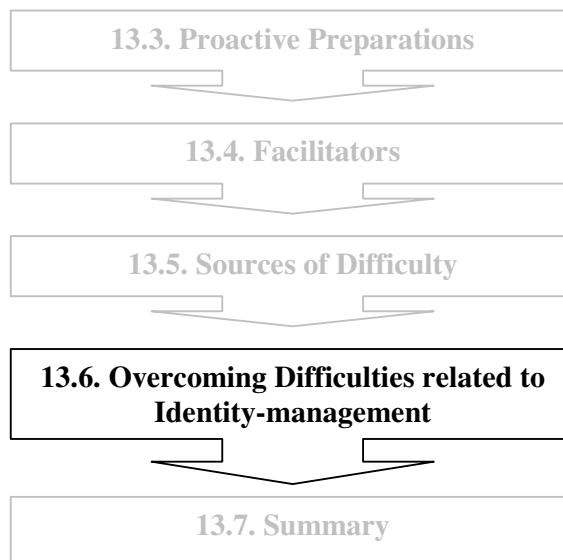
Figure 79. The structure of chapter thirteen: 13.6. Overcoming difficulties related to identity-management

Participants experiencing identity-management difficulties, as described in the previous subsection, also identified factors related to how they overcame, or attempted to overcome, identity-management difficulties (see figure 79).

13.6.1. Flexibility

Participants described utilising assertive solutions for overcoming identity-management difficulties based on flexibility, which allowed the participant to 'roll with the punches':

> *"I: so that's in terms of (pause) what you do to solve it is to sort of utilise the flexibility*
> *P17: mmm yes absolutely*
> *I hmmm*
> *P17: yeah I would absolutely, I've always had to be flexible because I eh have a husband who's job is very demanding which took him out of the country a lot I mean you know I've had family that emmm eh pressures that needed to be adjusted without you know compromising my own family and of course you have to adjust you have to adjust all the time but that doesn't mean that you can't have an end plan, it might take you longer to get there but*
> *I: yeah*
> *P17: but that's life, you know and eh yeah I would be very flexible"*
> *(P17)*

13.6.2. Take a Step Back

Participants also described overcoming perceived difficulties by taking a step back from what was happening and reviewing how best to deal with the difficulty they were experiencing:

> *"I: so if parts of your life were, clashing and there's no strong example at the moment anyway what would you do, to emm*
> *P1: overcome it*
> *I: yeah to*
> *P1: just you have to take a step back and take an objective look and eh an overview like and see you know where you have to ease off a little and where you have to put a little bit more work into that's it" (P1)*

13.6.3. Choose Top Priority

Participants described referring to their perception of what their top priority was in a given instance, in order to overcome difficulties being experienced in their life:

"I: and do you feel that any of the parts clash with one another or interrupt one another
P24: yeah if something crops up at the last minute but usually not no
I: and if something crops up would you have organised for that ahead of time or do you try and solve that when it occurs at the time
P24: well you just have to choose the most important one at a just explain why you couldn't pick the less important well you know
I: keep them onside but choose the right thing
P24: yes exactly just put it forward to another day" (P24)

13.6.4. Avoidance, Confrontation

Participants also identified avoidance and confrontation as strategies for dealing with experienced difficulties. Both of these strategies can be seen in the following example (no description of these strategies was found at time two, therefore this data originates from time one):

"I: and in terms of when those clashes occur how do you solve them or do they get solved or
P9: how do I solve them, eh I just, wait for them to go away, I can be confrontational I'm not as confrontational as I used to be eh but if I feel myself getting overtly confrontational I'll just turn around and walk off you know it's not worth it and then you know it'll calm down eventually" (P9)

13.6.5. Communication

Participants described attempting to overcome day-to-day identity-management difficulties by communicating effectively with others, for example negotiating or compromising agreement with others:

"I: and if that conflict starts to occur, emmm, how do you think you'd solve it
P2: I suppose just talk to the people in question really explain to them that I can't I'm not just as available as I would have been before hand so, but I think they'll understand that, I think they'll yeah they won't have any trouble understanding that" (P2)

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13.6.6. Keep Things Close Together

Perceived clashing between contexts was minimised or eliminated by some participants through bringing those contexts closer together, psychologically, physically and/or temporally. No description of this strategy was found at time one, therefore this data originates from time two. In the following illustrative example P12 describes bringing different contexts together in order to solve a difficulty caused by a perceived lack of time:

> "P12: *I think social, I think friends has come up higher* (in the participant's order of importance) *than social like friends is more important now than social at the moment but it's integrating both of them at the moment is what I'm kind of doing*
> I: *is that because of college*
> P12: *emmm no it's kind of time constraints like if I'm going emm out with friends I haven't seen enough of I will try to double up with going out with college friends just combine everyone together*
> I: *so if things clash is that how you try to solve them*
> P12: *try and compromise it yeah*" (P12)

13.6.7. Struggle Through It

A number of participants described not having any particular strategy that they would use to overcome perceived clashes between the contexts in their lives. They described themselves as being committed to their lives as currently structured and that they would struggle on until they achieved their goals (no description of this strategy was found at time one, therefore this data originates from time two):

> "I: *and how are you sorting that out when that's happening*
> P10: *like that I've just committed there's no way I can back out of it now you know I've really made it like a massive, conscious choice by something like that I've based everything on it it just cant happen so that's the way I am trying to look at it that I just have to get through it all, because like I have done this before and I did less it happened that I wasn't committing myself to it where as this time I was saying there's no way that's going to happen, this must succeed and at first you're all apprehensive because you're getting back into college but like that once I set up things like study groups and living here and then I found*

out I can do this and once that's out of the way I've made this bet and it's just going to happen" (P10)

A view was also expressed by those that perceived clashes involving the university context that these participants perceived that they only needed to struggle on until the summer break, when the perceived conflict was expected to lessen, at least temporarily:

> *"I: yeah and are these like clashes that you try to solve then are they just things to be managed*
> *P2: you manage I mean you can manage them you can cope you know you just have to make sure that you get the odd day off you know, trying to get enough sleep so you don't just sleep on the days off I find I just sleep all day when I've a day off which is annoying because you get up then and think damn the day's wasted I could have done something today, so yeah so they are clashing but it's only until college term is over like*
> *I: mmm*
> *P2: during the summer it'll be a lot more relaxed like (laugh)" (P2)*

13.6.8. No Solution

Some participants described having no solution to ongoing difficulties they perceived as occurring in their lives. This lack of strategies can be seen as a strategy in its own right, where these participants did not put up any resistance to the perceived difficulties:

> *"I: yeah yeah, and basically em if different parts are clashing in your life what you do to try and solve that like you were saying there already*
> *P23: yeah, I mean I try to prevent them but if they don't I mean there's nothing I can do*
> *I: you just stand back and let the work itself out*
> *P23: yeah because there is nothing I can directly do about it, I mean, when people like who they like I can't stop them and I have no intention of trying to" (P23)*

13.7. Summary

This chapter has presented research findings regarding how participants' identity-portfolios were affected by their entry into the university context. It examined how the process of identity-creation affected the participants' attempts at day-to-day identity-management. The results here describe how participants utilise proactive identity-management strategies, encounter particular difficulties in their attempts at identity-management and, if they had the capability, how participants utilised other reactive or adaptive strategies in order to overcome the difficulties they were experiencing.

In the next chapter results will be presented that relate to the importance of the participants' interpersonal relationships during this period of identity-creation, especially those they formed in the new, university context.

14. The Formation of Groups and Relationships in the University Context

14.1. The Position of Chapter Fourteen within Section B
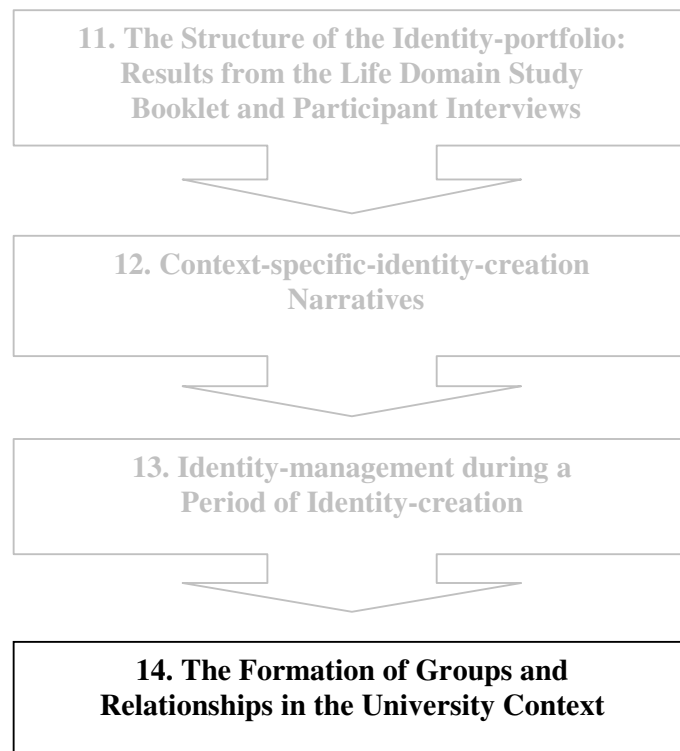
Figure 80. The structure of Section B: Chapter fourteen. The formation of groups and relationships in the university context

Chapter fourteen presents research findings related to the way in which the groups and relationships the participants co-created with other context-members in the university context impacted on their creation of a new context-specific-identity (see figure 80).

14.2. The Structure of Chapter Fourteen

This chapter presents research results relating to the participants' descriptions of the way in which the interpersonal relationships they formed with others in the

14.3. Identification with other Context-members

14.4. Proactive versus Reticent Socialisation

14.5. Mature Student Summer School

14.6. Participant Involvement in Prescribed Groups

14.7. Communication

14.8. Summary
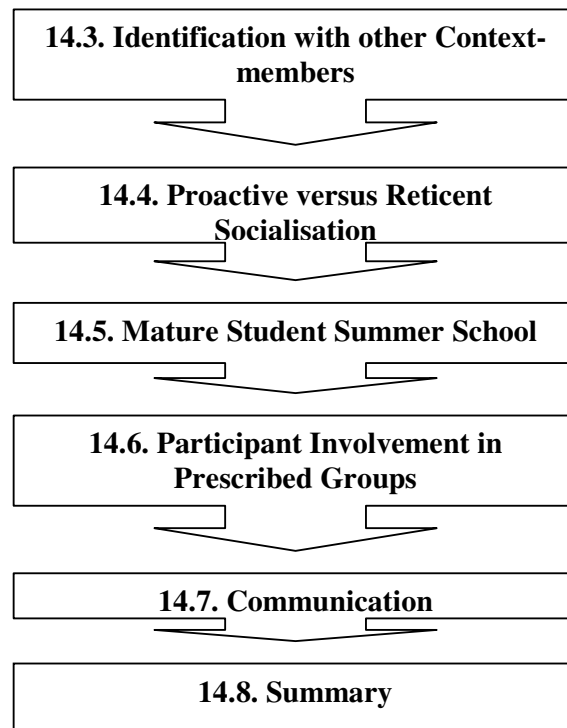
Figure 81. The structure of chapter fourteen

university context impacted on them in that new context. These interpersonal relationships were identified as being important in terms of both the participants' engagement in the identity-creation process and their engagement in day-to-day identity-management. In this way it can be seen that the research findings presented in this chapter are related to both sub-question two and sub-question three of the research question.

The participants described forming groups, relationships and social networks which were co-created with other context-members and also described being a member of the groups prescribed by the university, such as classes and tutorial groups. The participants cocreated groups with those context-members with whom they identified. However, many of the participants also identified with those context-members with whom they shared classes or tutorials, by virtue of their shared

membership of that prescribed group. Due to the organically cocreated groups being created within and across the prescribed groups the participants' 'identification contours' were often complex.

This chapter will present results from the analysis of the participants' data relating to how participants distinguished those context-members with whom they identified from those they did not. The differential effects of participants being proactively social or being reticent to socialise with other context members will be presented along with research findings related to the effects on the participants of a socialisation programme designed by the university. The participants' descriptions of their level of involvement in prescribed groups, and results relating to the different ways in which the participants described communicating with other context-members will also be presented.

14.3. Identification with other Context-members

This subsection presents research results relating to the participants' identification with other context-members (see figure 82).

14.3.1. Having Others to Identify with Makes Things Easier

Sources of support within the university context were described by participants as facilitating acculturation to the new university context. An example of a source of support would be a group of other context-members with whom a participant identified:

14.3. Identification with other Context-members

14.4. Proactive versus Reticent Socialisation

14.5. Mature Student Summer School

14.6. Participant Involvement in Prescribed Groups

14.7. Communication

14.8. Summary
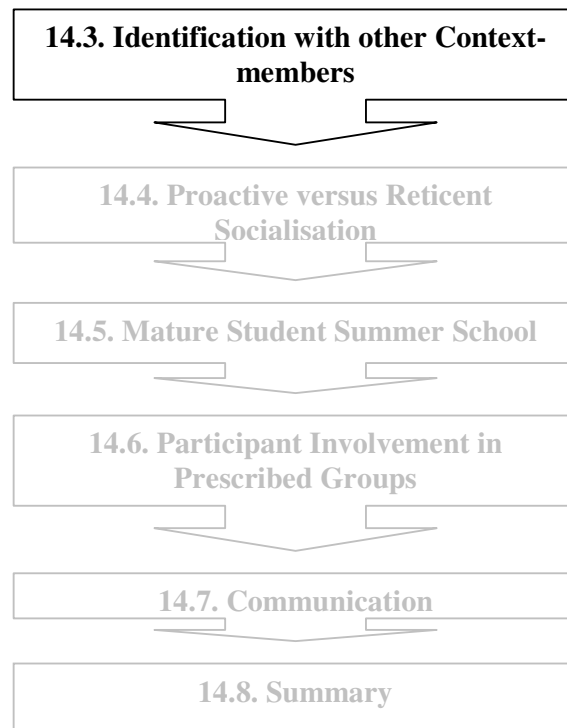
Figure 82. The structure of chapter fourteen: 14.3. Identification with other context-members

"I: and does it make it easier to have people around that you know you do identify with
P12: definitely if you're worried about something you can kind of say it to them now I don't have any children but a few of the girls do and they've that in common and can talk about that but yeah I get great relief from talking to the other girls" (P12)

14.3.2. Identification, by the Participants, with those they perceive as being Similar to Themselves

Participants described identifying with particular other context-members in the university context, typically with those perceived as being similar to the participants. These were context-members with whom the participants described (co)creating groups and social networks. The individuals in these groups or social networks would have a greater opportunity to impact on the participants' engagement in the identity-

creation process. Therefore the identity that is subsequently created by a participant will have been moulded by these groups and social networks. The participants expressed a preference for (co)creating groups with those individuals who they perceived as being similar to themselves, whether that similarity was based on age, shared membership of the mature student category or other shared categorisations:

> *"I: and what's the difference between those few people that you're identifying with and the people that you might just get on with or maybe not get on with at all*
> *P35: emmm, probably that we've come from similar backgrounds similar interests we've worked in similar jobs*
> *I: so you have a lot in common*
> *P35: yeah and I just didn't have as much in common with the others, it's just it's not that they're not nice people they are they're just different people to me" (P35)*

14.3.2.1. Similar Age/Point in the Lifespan

The most prevalent characteristic with which the participants identified was age, or the point in the lifespan at which the individual was currently located, where the age/point in the lifespan of the other individual(s) was perceived as being similar to the participants:

> *"I: within the class then are there people that you would identify with more than you would identify with other people*
> *P19: yeah people of the same age as me most definitely" (P19)*

The participants perceived divisions between different age groups that tended to be roughly divided between the seventeen to nineteen year olds (younger, non-mature students), the twenty to twenty-two year olds (older non-mature students), the twenty-three to thirty-five year olds (younger mature students), the thirty-five to forty-five year olds (mature students) and those older than forty-five (older mature students):

"I: and in terms of the class you're in now would you feel centrally involved in the class and it's goings on
P33: there's different sectors in the class already like you have the 17 18 year-olds and then you have the people the 22-30 sticking together and then you have the people maybe 35-45 there is maybe three distinctive groups and then there's the foreigners trying to blend in and learn as well fair play to them I don't know how they do it" (P38)

14.3.3. The Categorisation of Younger Students as 'Other'

The participants all categorised themselves as mature students, with the majority of the participants then constructing the younger or non-mature students, (those under the age of twenty-three), as 'other'. This resulted in the younger students being placed in opposition to the participants and the perceived characteristics of mature students:

Time one

The construction of the younger students as other was apparent at time one of the research study, when the participants had only been in the university context for a short amount of time:

"P23: yeah it's just that they're a lot younger than me like they're eighteen and stuff some are even seventeen and it's not that I don't want to talk to them it's just that I wouldn't I don't think we'd have anything in common" (P23)

Different characteristics of the younger students were highlighted by participants as they placed the younger students in opposition to themselves. The participants took characteristics they perceived they held themselves and attributed the opposite to the younger students. In the illustrative quote below the younger students are described as only being in university to get a degree and not for the love

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of education or the joy of being in university, as the participant describes himself as

being:

> *"I: and when you're inside in the class do you feel like you're right in the centre of it like that you're centrally involved*
> *P14: oh I do yeah I really eh I don't I was aware, I was aware of all these young people around me, but as I said at a presentation that was discussing sociology I was practising sociology or my brand of it for forty years I was talking about I don't shut myself off I'm able to chat to them but they don't bother me because I've already said they're already sweating for the qualification they'll have for the rest of their lives my life my working life is over this is a bit of a joy although not quite a joy it's a desire to just do something that I really wanted to do"*
> *(P14)*

In the next example the younger students are described as being only interested in

socialising, in 'getting a life', rather than being focused on getting a qualification, as

the participant describes herself as being:

> *"P12:…I sort of very early on thought I'm in this for me and I had that feeling ah I wasn't here to get a life I was here to get a degree*
> *I: yeah*
> *P21: you know that was actually a fairly common theme between the mature students that we weren't here to get lives*
> *I: yeah*
> *P21: the people who had no children you know the younger ones maybe in the group the single people they could afford to get a life while they were here*
> *I: yeah*
> *P21: but those of us that had family and children we were just here to get the degree*
> *I: yeah*
> *P21: so it made it a bit more (pause) I suppose more, single minded blinkered as to what was available to you" (P12)*

Time two

> At time two of the research study the perception of the younger students as

'other' persisted:

> *"P10: it's funny because my first reaction and ah like I'm 24 so I am only on the border of being a mature student so I thought I wouldn't be*

that different to the younger students but over time I realised that I am and starting to realise that it's true that I don't really relate to the lads around I still hang around with them and all I can see that, I've noticed it in the last few months there is that difference those couple of years" (P10)

Where participants did perceive commonalities between themselves and some of the younger students this perception still began from the point of view of mature students and younger students being separate groups or categories:

> *"I: and in terms of the class that you're in at the moment do you feel centrally involved in the groups and its goings on*
> *P17: yeah I am actually very lucky in so far that I get on really well with people that are younger than I am and they also get on well with people my age so I never have a problem going from one group to another I do see that the older people tend to stay together but I wouldn't be bothered, and with young people and it might sound terrible but with young people you only have to remember one thing about them and ask them about it and its grand and it's only a small thing so I get on with young people as well as old people" (P17)*

14.3.3.1. The University facilitates Younger Students' Way of Life

Participants described the university context itself as being organised so as to facilitate younger, non-mature students' way of life or 'way of being' but not the mature students' way of life or 'way of being':

> *"P20: I've worked in an equality briefing in gender equality and women's issues and you can be pushing for family friendly stuff and all that*
> *I: yeah*
> *P20: and it ain't family friendly when you've got a nine o clock lecture or one at six or five and you're getting out at six I mean they're not catering for families and you know you have to recognise that I mean I'm the only mature student in the course but maybe nursing or something you know that have a lot of mature students*
> *I: yeah I don't know*
> *P20: I doubt it because lecturers have to get in for nine o clock lectures and stuff as well and I'm sure a lot of them have families so, emmm even if they started at quarter past nine you know (laugh)*
> *I: ah sure people do arrive at quarter past nine*
> *P20: ah yeah and I mean that's going to happen yeah, I've managed it so far" (P20)*

This quote shows how the construction of the younger student as 'other' also involves a construction of the mature student category as being a minority category that does not represent the norm within the university context.

14.3.3.2. Younger Students as being Inexperienced in Life

The younger students were constructed, by the participants, as being inexperienced in life, in comparison to the mature students. This inexperience was described as having led to the younger students being immature and as yet unable to appreciate the difficulties of adult life:

> *"P12: coming in as a mature student we all have financial things and*
> *im not taking away from the younger guys and saying they don't*
> *I: maybe just different*
> *P12: very very different ands the other girls can identify with bills*
> *piling up and all that" (P12)*

14.3.3.3. The (Co)Creation of a Parent-Child Dynamic

A parent-child dynamic was created through the perception of the younger students as 'other'. This was achieved through participant descriptions of mature students as adults and parents and younger students as children, and through the comparison of younger students with participants' children. This was more common in the female participants' descriptions:

> *"P8: you cant get maximum output for minimum input, it just doesn't*
> *happen so there's serious frustration and they're so young and I am so*
> *old, in the group it's just the wrong make-up and there's a level of*
> *resentment from the kids because they see the mammy figure*
> *I: and does that make you feel in some way on the periphery*
> *P8: yeah constantly" (P8)*

14.3.3.4. Younger Students as Less Outspoken than Mature Students, but More

Educationally Skilled

At time two, when most participants had overcome earlier anxieties about being

in university, the younger students were described as being less ready to be outspoken

in, and contribute to, class discussions:

> *"P19: in a lecture you would have the older students speaking out first*
> *and they're doing the work for the class like if someone lets the*
> *lecturer know how the class is going and how people feel it's always*
> *the older ones that put the issues forward or maybe they're just not*
> *afraid of speaking out" (P19)*

There was an exception to the construction of the younger students as being

reticent to be active in class. The younger students were described as having an

advantage over the mature students in terms of their perceived, recent experience in

the education system:

> *"I: and at the moment do you feel any anxiety about being in college*
> *P9: yeah I do because of the things I've just been saying like I look at*
> *these 18 year-olds and I'm just in awe of their acumen you know their*
> *brain capacity and their capacity to multi-task it and it then and they'd*
> *look at me and because I am older they expect me to be smart and my*
> *anxiety would be to let them down like in group projects and things"*
> *(P9)*

14.3.4. Younger Mature Students: The In-Betweens

Some participants constructed themselves as being younger mature students.

The participants in this category are between the ages of twenty-three to thirty-five

but also categorised themselves as such due to being different from other mature-

students, for example not having an established family or career. These participants

described themselves as being 'stuck' in between the younger students and the mature

students who are older than they are or have more typical middle-aged adult lives.

They describe themselves having things in common with, but also feeling different from, both groups:

> *"I: and in terms of the class that you're in at the moment do you feel centrally involved in the class and it's goings on*
> *P27: I don't know being a mature student but not as old as the oldest fogies in here I annoy an awful lot of them I think but yeah I feel very much involved" (P27)*

14.3.5. Other Bases of Identification based on Perceived Similarity

Not all participants identified with other context-members on the basis of their age/point in the lifespan or by their categorisation as mature students. Other bases of identification, described by the participants, were based on perceived similarity in relation to a number of different factors, for example being an outgoing, helpful person and/or showing an active interest in their university course:

> *"I: so are there people that you identify with more than others*
> *P22: ah yeah*
> *I: and who are they*
> *P22: the people who I suppose who would be more active in sports and maybe a bit more outgoing*
> *I: but it's not just other mature students or anything*
> *P22: no no no*
> *I: it's more on the basis of eh athleticism*
> *P22: not really just how they're outgoing if they're open to being friendly" (P22)*

Being focused on the fulfilment of a specific personal goal or mission:

> *"P38: there's a few people in there that kind of have come on a moral crusade*
> *I: yeah*
> *P38: they've got the same motivation to do* (name of academic course) *they want to kind of want to repair something that was damaged you know so in that sense kind of for goals there's a number of people that I would identify with*
> *I: and is that why you'd identify with them because there's a, a common something in common*
> *P38: they've got the same goal as myself eh so I'd identify with them in that regard" (P38)*

Coming from a particular income bracket/social class:

> *"I:… now in the class that you're in are there people that you identify*
> *with more than others*
> *P8: yeah*
> *I: like what's the difference between the two*
> *P8: income bracket*
> *I: yeah*
> *P8: for mature students, emmm, it's an awful thing to say but it's the*
> *truth" (P8)*

Having a particular taste in music:

> *"I: and because of how you're describing these people you identify like*
> *are these the people that you communicate with most*
> *P37: I probably communicate with them solely because of the type of*
> *music that I'm into it's not exactly top of the pops stuff like and I'm*
> *very into alternative kind of music and these guys know a lot of stuff*
> *about music so it's a lot about taste of music*
> *I: and like out of the people in your classes in terms of who you*
> *communicate with most is it those people or is it more talking with the*
> *other people*
> *P37: I talk to everybody but I identify a bit more with those guys"*
> *(P37)*

And having a particular political viewpoint or being involved in trade unionism:

> *"I: and in the class at the moment are there people that you identify*
> *with more than you'd identify with others*
> *P16: they'd be one or two of similar backgrounds*
> *I: is that why you would identify with them because of similar*
> *background*
> *P16: yeah maybe trade union background" (P16)*

14.3.6. Exceptions to the Majority View of Identification based on Perceived Similarity

A small number of participants did not describe themselves as identifying with other students on the basis of perceived similarity. These participants described

themselves as identifying with others who were different from them or perceiving that there wasn't anyone in the university context that they can identify with.

14.3.6.1. Identifying with Different Groups

Some participants valued making connections with students from different groups, for reasons other than perceived similarity between themselves and the members of those groups:

Time one

In the following illustrative quote P3 describes wanting to associate with different groups of people as this variety is something he sees as adding to the quality of his time in the university context:

> *"P3: it's nice to meet people from outside your course as well because if you're around student nurses for so long then that's all the talk is about*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: I don't want to stay in one little group here I want to branch out and meet people, I don't know, a lot of the younger crowd are not really mixing as such at the moment… in relation to the younger students I'd like to get to know them a lot more because I feel I have a lot to offer them and certainly they have a lot to offer me mmm different perspectives like I have a lot of life experience emmm, in the course that we're doing" (P3)*

Time two

At time two, when participants had been attending classes, tutorials etc. for several months, many expressed a view that identifying with other groups, specifically the younger students in their classes, had beneficial effects. They still described these identifications as weaker than their identification with the groups they (co)created with those they perceived as being similar to themselves:

"I: so how do you feel about being in the class in terms of anxiety levels
P16: not as bad as they were in October I've settled in it's actually a great class to be in because you have to a range of 17 to, you know you have a great mix of different backgrounds and there's loads of young people there and where I was working there wasn't any recruitment so I wasn't meeting young people with new ideas and that's great craic
I: do you get a lot of that a range of different ideas
P16: oh yeah I'm listening to things now that never would have crossed my mind and you have to take them on board I mean that's the brilliant part of it" (P16)

14.3.6.2. Nobody to Identify with

A small number of participants did not perceive that there was anyone in the university context with whom they identified:

"P34: no I don't know anyone I don't have no friends in college
I: and at there people in college that you would talk to more than others
P34: like there are a few people that I would talk to more so I do have people that I hang around with but I don't feel like part of a class not at all" (P34)

14.4. Proactive Versus Reticent Socialisation

Research findings will be presented that demonstrate the way in which participants differed in terms of the degree of readiness they described themselves as having with regard to socialising with other context-members in the university context (see figure 83).

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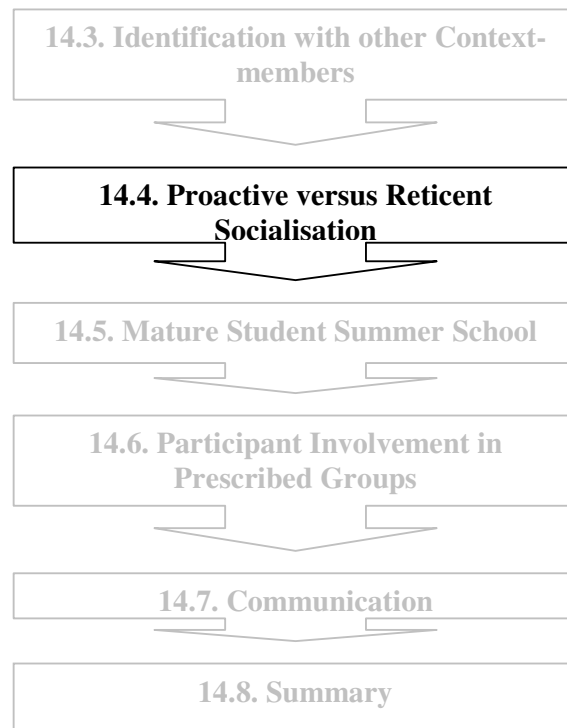
Figure 83. The structure of chapter fourteen: 14.4. Proactive versus reticent socialisation

14.4.1. Proactive Socialisation

At time one of the current research study some participants were proactively anticipating how they would form relationships, groups and social networks with other context-members. These participants tended to have preset criteria for how they would choose context-members to be in their social network or were organising events etc. in order to meet other people in the university context:

> *"I: since you've been in the college have you taken part in any other activities other than ones directly related to the lectures or course time*
> *P12: well we went to the freshers thing in the hub a while ago the freshers ball, that was fun I organised a class night out there on Monday so people would get another chance to mix" (P12)*

14.4.2. Reticent about Socialising

A number of participants constructed themselves as being reticent in their interpersonal interactions with others in the university context. Consequently they tended to 'hang back' in terms of socialising and building relationships with other context-members:

> "I: yeah and did you take part in the mature student summer camp thing
> P14: I wasn't here for anything like that I was here for the orientation like but there was a thing on and I didn't come back for that because I don't smoke and I don't drink and I didn't buy a club ticket for the bar because it's just not my scene" (P14)

P13, at time two, had withdrawn from socialising with many of the people with whom she socialised at time one, due to a perceived conflict between her and members of that group:

> "P13: things have changed big time there used to be one big group like the mature students when I came in all the mature students used a pal together and it was one big clique and it was grand and if you're in that clique and you have a falling-out with one person which is what happened to me you're just gone you're outside so it's like what do you do I hate college, I hate it
> I: and they're the people that you identify with now are they the people you see as being genuine and up front
> P13: ah like I pal with maybe two close friends and I'd prefer having a few close friends than all the fakes that talk about you and all, yeah I get on great with those people but I do feel very isolated at the same time because as I said I would have been pal-ing with a very big group and its grand when you're in it but once you're outside that circle because everyone is in their groups now and everyone is cliquey, but it's very hard to make new friends when people are already in groups you know it's very isolating" (P13)

This perceived conflict and negative change in P13's social circumstances affected the course of her identity-creation in the university context and also affected her day-to-day identity-management.

14.5. Mature Student Summer School in University One

In university one, the mature student office organised a 'mature student summer school' (see figure 84). This was a voluntarily attended, introductory, three-day course where mature students attended talks focused on varying aspects of mature student life and had the opportunity to socialise with one another. All but two of those

14.3. Identification with other Context-members

14.4. Proactive versus Reticent Socialisation

14.5. Mature Student Summer School

14.6. Participant Involvement in Prescribed Groups

14.7. Communication

14.8. Summary
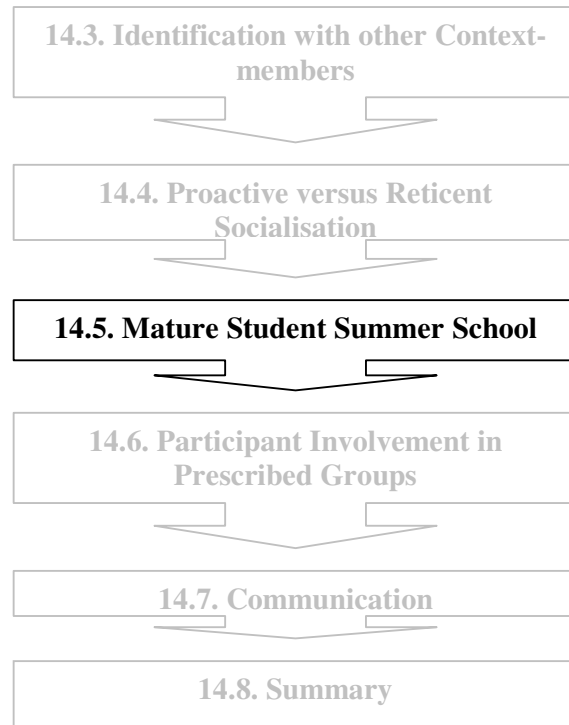
Figure 84. The structure of chapter fourteen: 14.5. Mature student summer school

participants from university one who attended the summer school reported positive affects related to attending the summer camp.

14.5.1. Handy Tips

Participants described the summer school as being beneficial in terms of the insights they gained with regard to practical tips and/or knowledge related to the university and university life:

> *"I: emmm so in terms of the summer school that you did do did that help, to settle any qualms that you may have had*
> *P2: it did yeah because the access services is very helpful like you know* (name of mature student officer) *and all that like you know if you did have any problems and went to them they'd do their best to help you emmm yeah I think it was a good idea*
> *I: but like I mean*
> *P2: because we got to wander around and see the place like*
> *I: but I suppose they they couldn't have gotten rid of anxieties that you didn't have you know because you were pretty alright*
> *P2: yeah I was grand coming back but, you know but even then there was handy tips from other mature students like about you know like because a lot of the ones coming back haven't been in education before but I have like I have my diploma so for a lot of them it was a lot more helpful maybe*
> *I: yeah*
> *P2: because they wouldn't know much about study skills and that kind of thing or essay writing like*
> *I: yeah*
> *P2: I mean even for me because I haven't, I done my diploma three or four years ago so emmm, it was good it refreshed it like it brought it all back to me" (P2)*

14.5.2. Reduced Anxiety

The most significant result of the summer school was that it reduced the anxiety the participants in university one felt as they entered into this new university context. This effect was achieved by allowing participants to see that there were many other mature students who held the same fears and anxieties as they did:

> *"I: and did the summer camp help with that* (the participant's anxiety at entering into the university context)
> *P19: it did it disappeared as soon as I realised that there were all these other people coming into the college with the same fears and anxieties" (P19)*

14.5.3. Opportunity for Socialising

Those participants who attended the summer school described the beneficial effect of meeting other mature students during the three day course. This facilitated the creation of social networks, even if only at the level of a participant being able to recognise someone else when they joined their prescribed classes at the beginning of the academic year:

> *"I: but you and* (name of other mature student) *kind of spotted each other*
> *P2: we did yeah because I knew she was doing* (name of course) *and there was this other lad, oh there is another fella doing* (name of course) *actually I don't know his name but I've met him a few times he's quite friendly we get on quite well but he was saying oh* (name of other mature student) *is doing* (name of course) *as well so that's how we met like and then we all sort of hung out together at the mature student thing, yeah it was helpful like, really good to find someone doing the same course as me, and he's literally the same age as me as well*
> *I: did you meet in the summer school*
> *P2: we met in the summer school yeah" (P2)*

14.5.4. Thoughts of Exiting the University Context Curbed by Involvement

Two participants expressed the view that if they had not attended the mature student summer school the anxiety of entering the new context would have overwhelmed them and they would have left the university context:

> *"I: yeah, so the summer camp*
> *P16: ah that was well even going to that was now I was half looking for any excuse to leg it you know and if it had've just been the week after just coming in for the orientation week ah I definitely would have legged it*
> *I: so that was definitely something that helped you ease into it*
> *P16: ahh definitely" (P16)*

14.5.5. Negative Comments

There were a small number of negative comments made about the mature student summer school's content. However, the participants who made these comments also felt that the course had been helpful overall:

> *"P10: there was a few elements that came in like one was learning as a mature student or something like that and they were giving us statistics that oh mature students tend to do well or eh, mature students tend to, eh, like the characteristics of mature students telling us about ourselves whereas a lot of people were looking for how do you write out reports or eh how do you eh send an email or whatever and they did have an email thing but it was very vague really softly taught and quiet and people couldn't hear and stuff...it could have been a bit more practical like a bit more specific like examples of lab reports or assignment set ups" (P10)*

14.5.6. Regrets about not Attending the Summer Camp

Two participants in university one, one of whom did not attend any of the summer school, and the other who only attended for one day, both expressed that they regretted not attending the course. These participants felt they missed out on valuable information and socialising opportunities:

> *"I: and does feeling on the periphery increase how anxious you might feel about the class*
> *P5: yeah I think it does yeah and I hope, one thing that was wrong was that I was in* (name of country) *when they had the mature student summer camp and I missed it and I think they need to let people know far in advance, about that as soon as people know they have a place because if I'd known earlier I'd never have considered going away, I feel I missed out on so much" (P5)*

14.6. Participant Involvement in Prescribed Groups in the University Context
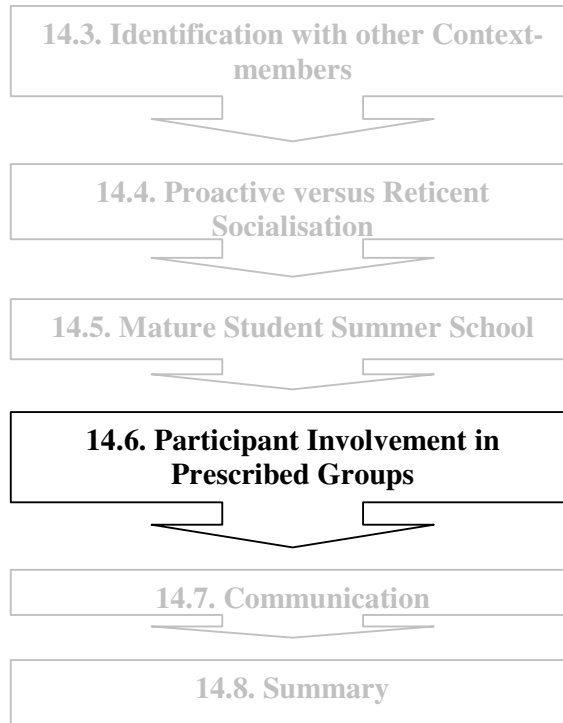
Figure 85. The structure of chapter fourteen: 14.6. Participant involvement in prescribed groups

Participant engagement in identity-creation and identity-management processes was affected by the level of involvement the participant perceived themselves as having in those groups prescribed by the university context (see figure 85). Participants identified themselves as being centrally or peripherally involved in these groups.

None, some or all the members of the more organically (co)created groups, which were formed by the participants and other context-members, were also present in their prescribed group(s) (see figure 86). Discussion of participants' involvement in

prescribed groups often prompted discussion of the participants' organically created group(s). This added to the complexity of the data relating to the participants' 'identification contours' in the university context.
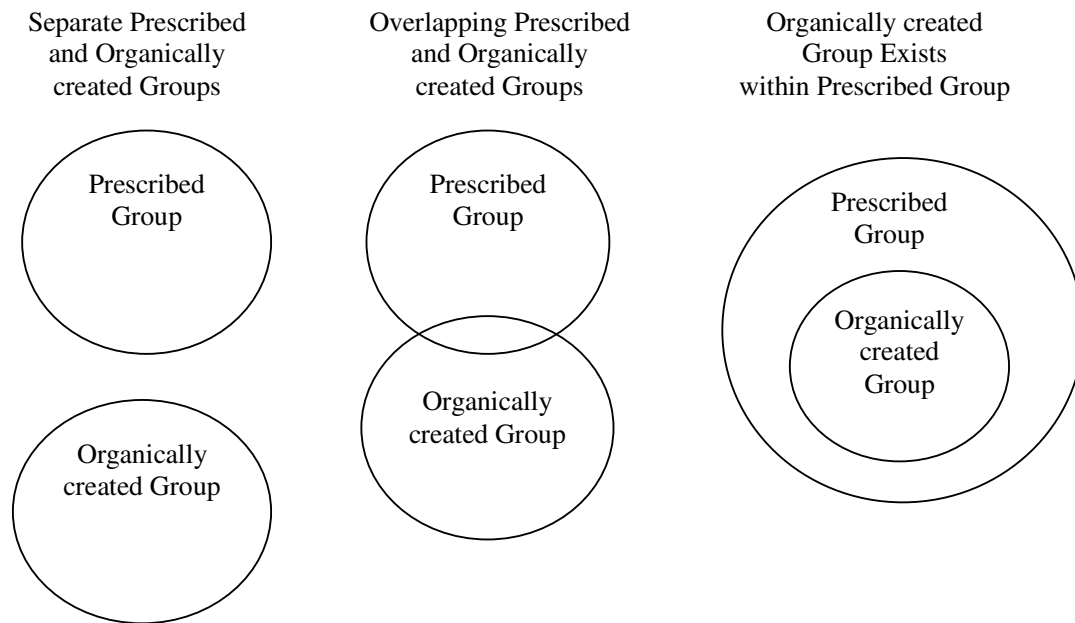
Figure 86. The relationship between participants' prescribed and organically created groups

14.6.1. Participants who described feeling Centrally Involved in Prescribed Groups

Central involvement in prescribed groups was described by the participants as having a positive impact on their engagement in identity-creation and identity-management strategies.

Time one

In the following illustrative quote P3 describes the positive affect his involvement in a prescribed group has had on his early experiences in the university context:

> *"P3:…I was asked by several people some of who I don't even know like I'm fairly vocal in eh the lectures and that I wouldn't be afraid to ask questions it might sound like a stupid question but to me it's important there might be something that I've missed I've been asked by people would I be interested in going for class rep, so just as a matter of interest I sent out an email to my class and the amount of responses I've got back it's been brilliant*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: and very surprising so yeah in a way I see myself as central but there's a bigger group to kind of get involved with*
> *I: yeah yeah but you definitely don't feel peripheral*
> *P3: ah not at all I mean three weeks ago I would have because I was oh my god thirty-two going back and these are all kids*
> *I: yeah*
> *P3: but now no everybody is just the same and you know you just treat people as you meet them and that's it" (P3)*

Time two

Participants who described themselves as centrally involved at time one described themselves as centrally involved, if not more centrally involved, at time two:

> *"I: and do you feel centrally involved in the class that you're in at the moment*
> *P12: more so than at the beginning of the semester*
> *I: and do you feel that that gives you influence in the class*
> *P12: it does to a certain extent things like tutorials there's only three or four of us that would show up so you do get to choose the one and I would be more of a leader than the others say you can kind of swing it the way you want, without that sounding bad" (P12)*

In the minority of cases where this maintenance or increase of central involvement did not occur there were specific extenuating circumstances that were identified as being responsible for the reduction in participant involvement in prescribed groups. For example, P13 no longer felt centrally involved in her

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prescribed groups because of a perceived conflict with other mature students that disrupted her social network:

> *"I: and in terms of the class at the moment do you feel centrally involved in the class and it's goings on*
> *P13: no I have dwindled out I've my own issues going on*
> *I: so do you feel more on the periphery of the class*
> *P13: well I'm not the centre anyway I don't like being that way I like just, I don't like being the centre of attention I like to be unnoticed most of the time" (P13)*

P33 no longer felt centrally involved in her prescribed groups because of low attendance at university due to being recalled to her job by her superiors, an event over which she had little control:

> *"I: and in terms of the college now do you still have contact with the people there*
> *P33: well no, eh because they stopped classes there in April so they could have a month off before the exams so I suppose I do feel isolated that they're all down there studying and I'm up here working and I'm like ohh I'm going to be behind and that is a real worry and I do think I'm way behind but that's just human nature, but I've friends down there and hopefully they'll help me to get up to standard" (P33)*

14.6.2. Participants who described feeling Peripherally Involved in Prescribed Groups

Peripheral involvement in prescribed groups was described by participants as resulting from being anxious or having a lack of confidence in their prescribed groups:

Time one

At time one of the research study participants described being peripherally involved in prescribed groups due to their anxiety or lack of confidence in terms of entering and becoming acculturated to the university context:

"I: emm, in terms of the class that you're in now and I know you've only been back like a week and a bit do you feel that you are centrally involved in your class
P4: no not at the moment I'm still getting used to it
I: does that mean that you feel you're more on the periphery of it
P4: yeah
I: yeah and how does that make you feel about being in the class like
P4: ammm,
I: I mean would have been anxious when you were coming in
P4: yeah, very much so
I: and is that is maybe not feeling centrally involved making that worse or
P4: yeah I think that like, I don't feel as involved because it is a big change for me to come back even though I have been in college before it is strange being back and like being in a class in a big load of younger people that's why I feel on the periphery as well you know"
(P4)

Participants who described themselves as peripherally involved at time one were generally optimistic that they would become more centrally involved as the academic year went on:

"I: do you feel as a class or as a group that you're centrally involved in the class
P1: not just yet like
I: not yet because I mean you mentioned there that there seems to be a bit of cliqueyness
P1: yeah there's a bit of cliqueyness like… but I'd say I'll be grand you know what I mean
I: yeah but I mean
P1: I mean I was waffling away in that (name of subject) *class today you know asking questions and all*
I: not feeling centrally involved but does that make you feel like sort of on the periphery at the moment
P1: at the moment yeah for the first few days like
I: but you're looking at
P1: I'm looking at taking it over world domination (laugh)" (P1)

However, a small number of participants imbued themselves with characteristics that indicated they, by their very nature, belonged on the periphery of their prescribed group(s):

"I: yeah, and in terms of the class that you're in at the moment and I know you haven't been in the class for very long but emmm do you feel centrally involved in the class at the moment
P15: I wouldn't say centrally involved because
I: if you don't feel centrally involved would you feel on the periphery of the class
P15: I feel on the periphery but I don't have an issue with that
I: yeah uh
P15: because I don't mind not being in the centre because I'm not confident enough I don't know enough...I'm happy to be there, emmm, because it will take a while for me to be confident enough to, really partake" (P15)

Time two

At time two those who described feeling peripherally involved at time one tended to describe themselves as feeling more involved at time two. If they did not go as far as describing themselves as centrally involved then they described themselves as less peripherally involved. The following illustrative quote is representative of those participants who changed from describing themselves as peripherally involved at time one to describing themselves as being centrally involved at time two:

"I: right emm, yeah focusing in on college then do you feel centrally involved in the class you're in at the moment and what's going on in the class
P4: emmm, yeah I suppose I am, yeah I mean I attend lecturers and, eh I know everyone in the class now so
I: and like do you feel like that gives you any like influence in the class
P4: I don't know about influence I suppose maybe being older that people take more notice of you in the class and especially the lecturers that they talk to you because, I don't know about influencing...like eh class discussions everything no problem in talking and all eh again maybe it's being older you know like the first time I was in college maybe I wouldn't have you know" (P4)

This illustrative quote is representative of those participants who felt they had not become centrally peripheral at time two but were now somewhere in between peripherally and centrally involved, or perhaps centrally involved in some prescribed groups but peripherally involved in others:

"I: and at the moment in the class that you're in do you feel centrally involved in the class and it's goings on
P10: emm that particular class that I'm in is small so I'd say so the people in there I generally know and I have a study group of a few lads and we get together when we need to study something so I would in that particular class but in the larger class not really no" (P10)

A small number of participants described themselves as being peripherally involved at time two of the research study. In the following illustrative quote P9 describes feeling less involved in a prescribed group than he did at time one of the research study, due to a perceived mishandling of the socialisation process:

"I: and in terms of the class that you're in at the moment do you feel centrally involved in the class and it's goings on
P9: emmm, actually no
I: no
P9: no and that has changed I feel less involved when I first met you back then it was like oh we're all in together and I didn't know anyone but now I know everybody and I'm more marginalised
I: so you feel more on the periphery
P9: more marginalised than before because at the beginning I was like hey I'll be everybody's friend but now it's like, half the people think I'm the mad guy in the leather jacket and I just sit there you know but the lines have definitely been carved in well maybe not in stone but just pushed in sand (laugh)" (P9)

14.6.3. Feeling in between Centrally and Peripherally Involved, or feeling both Centrally and Peripherally Involved in different Instances

Another way in which participants described themselves in relation to the concepts of central and peripheral involvement in prescribed groups was to place themselves in between those two categorisations, or to describe themselves as occupying both categories, depending on a number of factors.

Time one

Participants who did not feel centrally or peripherally involved described themselves, at time one of the research study, as being somewhere in between these two categories:

> "I: and in terms of the class that you're in at the moment do you feel like you're centrally involved in the class at the moment
> P27: emmm I wouldn't say centrally involved and I wouldn't say peripheral either I'd say outer middle because I'm not here enough
> I: and that level of involvement would you have had a certain level of anxiety when you were coming in
> P27: ehhh, no emm, no no I don't have anxieties about groups and things like that really no
> I: so would the level of involvement in the class at the moment make you feel more confident or less confident then when you arrived first
> P27: emm yeah I would be more confident it's more familiar now"
> (P27)

A number of participants described themselves as being centrally involved in certain circumstances, within the groups prescribed by the university context, but as being peripherally involved in others. An important factor was that the smaller the size of the prescribed group the more comfortable the participants described being, and also how centrally involved they felt in that group:

> "I: and in terms of the class that you're in now do you feel centrally involved in the class or would you feel more on the periphery
> P31: I would feel very on the periphery in some subjects do you mean socially or in other stuff
> I: both
> P31: well for some subjects it's a bit alien and I feel on the periphery but I feel very at home in the subject that has to do with my work and I even put myself up for class rep you know because it's just a confidence thing but I would definitely feel on the periphery of the classes socially" (P31)

Time two

At time two of the research study those who had described feeling neither centrally or peripherally involved, or feeling that they were both in different

instances, at time one, tended to describe themselves as being more centrally involved

in prescribed groups:

> "I: ok, and in terms of eh if there was a discussion in class or if the
> lecturer said you all have to decide something and then get back to me
> P35: yeah
> I: would you feel that you would have influence in that
> P35: oh yeah
> I: kind of discussion
> P35: oh yeah oh I do feel like as a class in class like we've something
> to do as a class like I don't feel, inadequate like I do feel like my input
> is important" (P35)

However, a small number of participants maintained their position as being neither

centrally nor peripherally involved:

> "I: and in terms of the class that you're in at the moment do you feel
> centrally involved in the class and it's goings on
> P23: I wouldn't feel centrally involved in it but like but I wouldn't want
> to be completely centrally involved there I don't have the time to be
> completely essentially involved you know
> I: but do you feel on the periphery then
> P23: no I wouldn't feel on the periphery I do my own thing and I have
> friends in the class as well us and I have friends in other classes so
> emm so I suppose we just kind of do our own thing" (P23)"
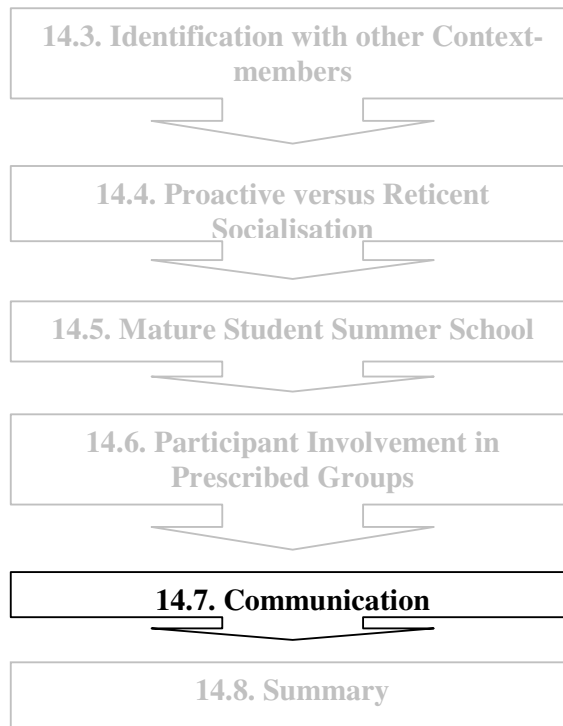
Figure 87. The structure of chapter fourteen: 14.7. Communication

Participants differed in the degree to which they communicated with other students about the other contexts, outside of the university context, that existed in their lives (see figure 87). This can be seen as being connected with participant preferences for integrating or segregating the different contexts that they perceived as existing in their lives.

14.7.1. Context-specific Communication

A number of participants described managing communication with other context members by restricting those communications, for example casual conversations, to matters to do with the university context:

"I: and emmm, if you're talking to the people that you would talk to are these conversations stay in college about college or do they kind of would they span out to other topics about life
P36; it would depend on who I was talking to a lot of them you can't differentiate between what's college and what's not it's like what's a dream and what's wake you know it all seems to meld into one like but a few of them now would just seem to talk about college life eh and how you got here and did you have a good day but rarely do they ask you about your weekend
I: and which is better which makes things easier to be in the class
P36: I don't know I think maybe in college conversations are easier emmm most of the time
I: yeah
P36: because I tend to switch off if someone is telling me about their great aunt over in wherever I switch off but if it's something I can identify with then that's grand
I: yeah
P36: I can latch onto that and I can input into that conversation
I: and that'd be more the stuff about college
P36: yeah" (P36)

Other participants described feeling forced into restrictive communication with other

context members due to not having much in common with the other context-members:

"I: and are there people in the class that you would talk to
P34: yeah
I: and when you're talking to them are the conversations just about college or do the conversations move out to different aspects of people's lives
P34: emm most of it would be around college and the lecturers and lecturers and assignments and those kind of things
I: and do you think it would be easier if the conversations were broader
P34: yeah oh yeah it would be nice if you could share more, it's just my interests in life are a little bit different to others" (P34)

At time one of the research study some participants saw this restricted

communication as a product of not having sufficient opportunity to get to know the

context-members with whom they were communicating:

"I: and those people that you'd identify with so far when you're talking with them do you just talk about college or would you talk about other things as well

P26: no it's just about college definitely not about other things we're in the forming stage of things" (P26)

15.7.2. Non-context-specific Communication

A number of participant's described managing their communication with other context members by communicating with them about issues that not only relate to the university context but also to other contexts in the participant's life, outside of the university context:

"I: and what do ye talk about
P27: ah we talk about everything
I: and does that make it easier
P27: of course you're not just a college head then you know and it's easier to interact there's nothing restrictive then you know" (P27)

At time two of the current research study there was an increase in the number of participants who described having a preference for non-context-specific communication with other students:

"I: and like what do ye talk about
P36: mainly college, which is sad yerragh no general stuff like, going out at the weekend who's going out with who and what happened and all this business but it doesn't range very far from college and from the sort of life we have at the moment like, do you know I wouldn't know these people as eh what their families are like or dreams for the future or any of that business
I: but it's not strictly about college
P36: oh no no it's not no
I: ye'd have some idea of each other as you know whatever people are in other parts of their lives or whatever
P36: yeah definitely like it's, it's becoming easier to get to know people, whereas like you'll remember at the start of the year I was totally like I didn't know what was happening or I didn't know who was who it was mad like yeah it's not so bad now it's more of a group" (P36)

14.8. Summary

This chapter has presented research findings relating to how interpersonal relationships, which the participants formed with others in the university context, impacted upon their engagement in processes of identity-creation and identity-management. This has been done with reference to the groups, relationships and social networks which were co-created with other context-members and to the groups prescribed by the university, such as classes and tutorial groups. This chapter has discussed the differing bases of identification participants utilised in the (co)creation, development and maintenance of their interpersonal relationships in the university context. It also presented results relating to the differing effects of being either proactively social or being reticent to socialise with other context members, the effects of attending a university organised socialisation programme on participants attending university one, the participants' descriptions of their level of involvement in prescribed groups and different ways in which participants managed their communications with other context-members.

This is the last chapter in Section B, which has presented the results that emerged from the research study's analysis of participant data. The next chapter will be the first of Section C, which comprises of three chapters. These chapters are chapter fifteen (introduction to section C), chapter sixteen (Discussion), which will add a theoretical dimension to the results that have been presented thus far, and chapter seventeen (Conclusion), which will make appropriate concluding comments regarding the current research study.

Section C

15. Introduction to Section C

15.1. The Structure of Section C
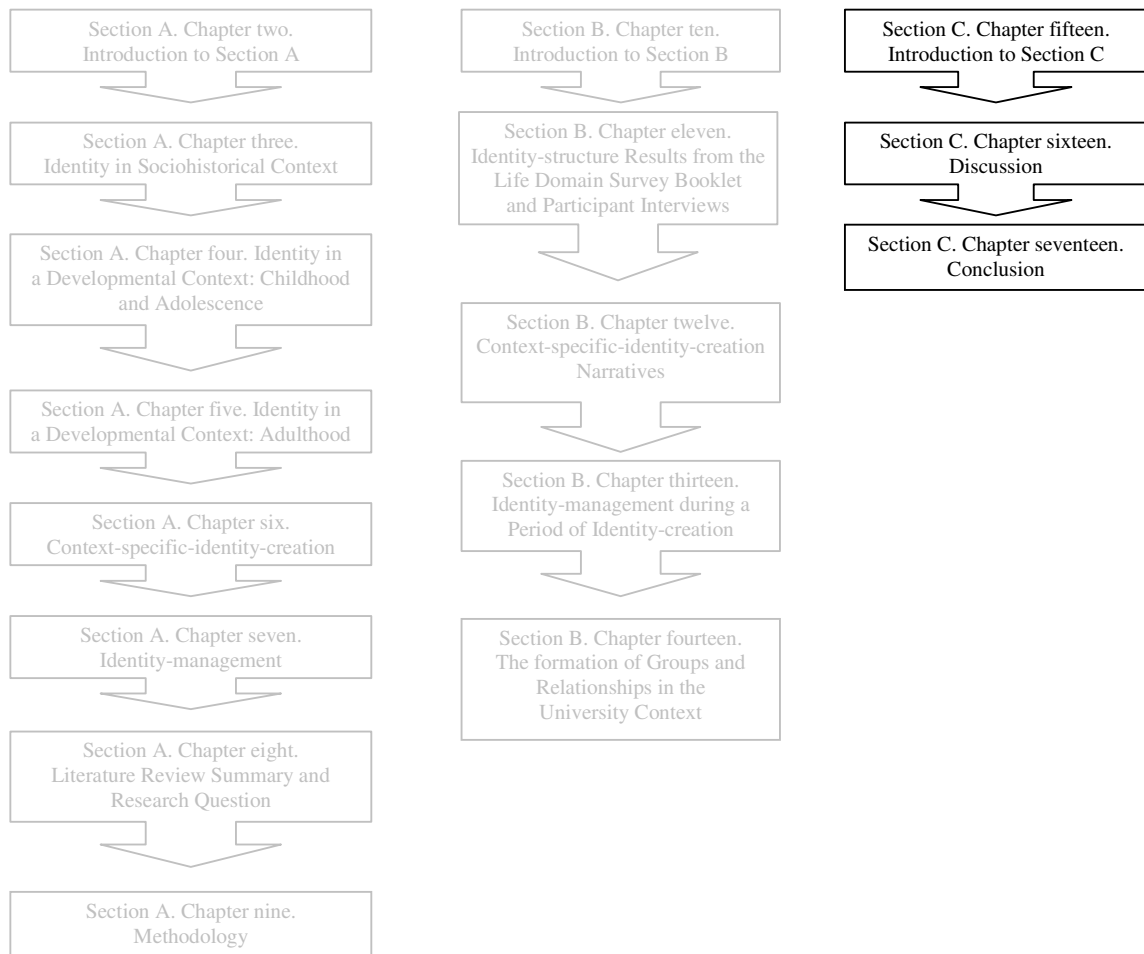
Figure 88. The structure of section C in relation to the overall thesis structure

Section C (see figure 88) of the thesis is made up of chapters fifteen to seventeen (see figure 89). The current chapter functions as an introduction to chapters sixteen and seventeen. Chapter sixteen, the discussion, adds a theoretical dimension to the results presented in Section B, in order that possible explanations for the participants' constructions of their identity-structure, identity-creation processes and identity-management processes can be explored. Chapter seventeen, the conclusion, makes appropriate concluding comments regarding the current research study.
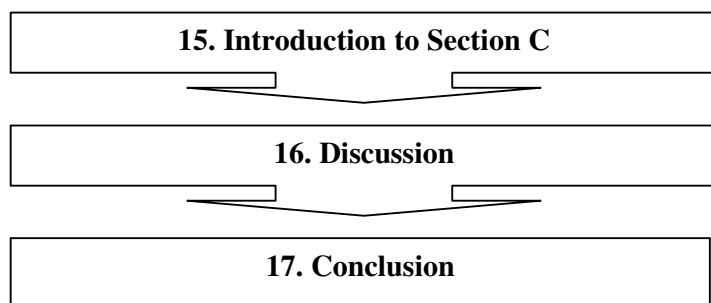
Figure 89. The structure of section C

16. Discussion

16.1. The Position of Chapter Sixteen within Section C
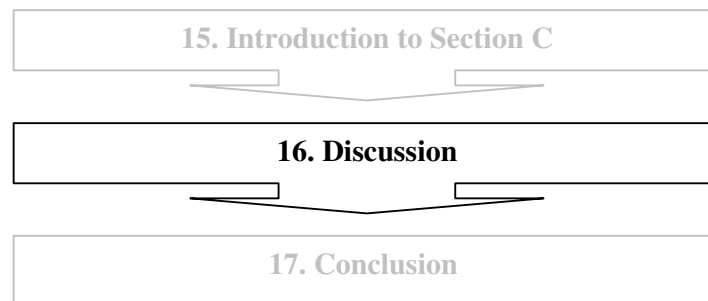
Figure 90. The structure of section C: Chapter sixteen

Chapter sixteen's function, within Section C (see figure 90), is to add a theoretical dimension to the results presented in Section B, in order that possible explanations for the participants' constructions of their identity-structure, identity-creation processes and identity-management processes can be explored.

16.2. The Structure of Chapter Sixteen

Chapters ten to fourteen presented the emergent results from an analysis of participant data. The current chapter (see figure 91) seeks to add a theoretical dimension to these results. This is accomplished by drawing attention to the significant findings of the current research study and situating these findings in relation to the existing theory relating to identity-structure, identity-creation processes and identity-management processes. Through this process this chapter will propose reasonable answers, based on the data analysis, to the questions related to how

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│      16.3. The Identity-portfolio        │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  16.4. The Creation of a Context-specific-identity: │
│     Construction of Overarching Narratives          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      16.5. Identity-management in a      │
│        Period of Identity-creation       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      16.6. Identity-portfolio-management │
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│              16.7. Summary               │
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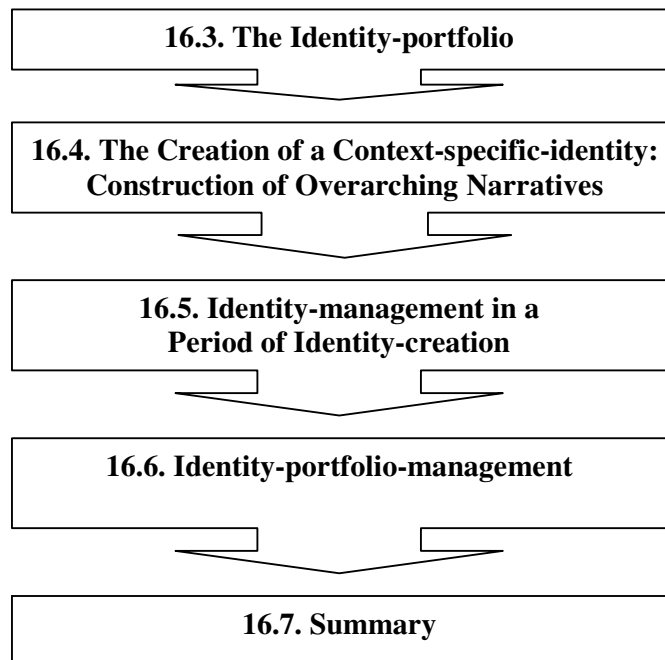
Figure 91. Structure of chapter sixteen

individuals create and manage elements of their identity-portfolio during their entry
into a new organisational context. The discussion will then link the research results to
a more theoretical discussion of identity-structures, identity-creation processes and
identity-management processes in context.

The research results discussed in this chapter must be placed in the context of
a continuous, lifelong process of identity-development, in a continuous process of
engagement in identity-work as each participant moves through the lifespan
experiencing new life events and constantly re-structuring their identity-portfolio
(Erikson, 1968; Harter, 1999; Kroger, 2003; Kroger and Haslett, 1991; Waterman and
Archer, 1990, cited in Ashforth, 2001 Whitbourne, 1986b). Identity-creation or
identity-development does not occur neatly in one cataclysmic instance, but over time
(Kroger, 2003). The research results must also be placed within an appropriate
cultural and sociohistorical context(Kashima and Foddy, 2002, pp. 181; Baumeister,

1999; Bukobza, 2007; Cote, 1996; Freeman, 1993; Harbus, 2002; McLean, Pasupathi and Pais, 2007; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004).

Firstly, the current chapter will focus on matters relating to elements of identity-structure and the identity-portfolio. Secondly, there will be a focus on processes involved in context-specific-identity-creation. Thirdly, there will be a presentation of the processes related to issues of day-to-day identity-management. Finally, the current chapter will bring together several different elements of the research results to present a model highlighting the symbiotic relationship between the macro (the construction and maintenance of overarching narratives) and micro (day-to-day identity-management) aspects of identity-portfolio-management, specifically during a period of identity-creation.

16.3. The Identity-portfolio
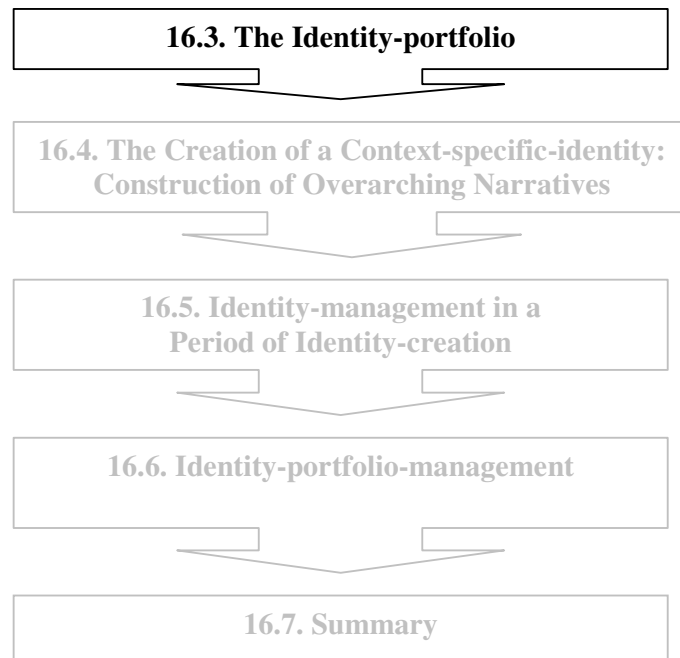
Figure 92. Structure of chapter sixteen: 16.3. The identity-portfolio

This subsection of the discussion (see figure 92) focuses on the structure of the participants identity-portfolios. A participant's 'identity' can be seen, based on the data analysis and supported by sources in the existing literature, as a multidimensional identity-structure (the identity-portfolio). The identity-portfolio is made up of a general-identity and, typically, several context-specific-identities (see figure 98), arranged in an identity-hierarchy (see table 22).

The participants in the current research study were readily able to divide their lives into different, perceived contexts when completing the Life Domain Study Booklet (LDSB) at time one of the research study. These represented the different identities that made up a participant's identity-portfolio in that the participants perceived and discussed themselves in relation to these 'parts' of their lives. This research finding is similar to that of Roberts and Donahue (1994) who found that their sample of 89 middle-aged women saw themselves differently in their different 'roles', for example as partner or daughter. It also concurs with findings from Nipert-Eng (1996) and Campbell-Clark's (2000) research as both these researchers found that individuals commonly perceive or construct themselves differently in work and home/family contexts. The majority of the participants in the current research study listed commonly recognisable contexts, in Western culture, such as 'family', 'work', 'friends' and 'university' or 'education' for the context they were in the process of entering. Three participants, when completing the LDSB, divided their life into temporal stages ranging from their early life to the present, but even they, when speaking about the structure of their lives in the present, in subsequent interviews, readily described perceiving their life as being constituted of different contexts. Therefore, it can be said that no participant in this study found it impossible to

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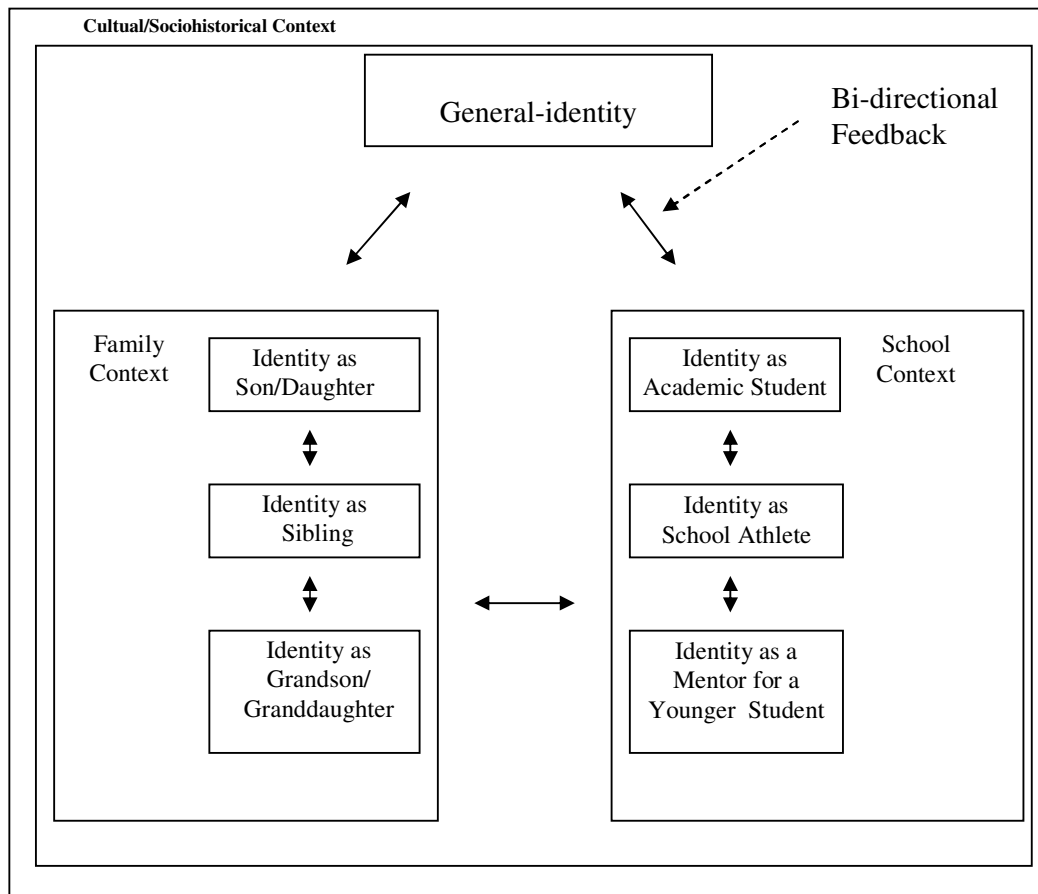
Figure 93. A typical identity-portfolio: A general-identity and several context-specific-identities

perceptually divide up their life into more or less distinct contexts, which can be seen as representing the different elements of their identity-portfolio. Some of the contexts described as existing in the participants' lives were more abstract than others, for example 'happiness' or 'creativity', while others were extremely specific, for example 'exercise at gym', thereby indicating that the participants were capable of holding salient self-

Table 22. Identities arranged in an identity-hierarchy

Place in Identity Hierarchy	Identity
1	General-Identity
2	Family-identity
3	Student-identity
4	Work-identity

perceptions at various levels of abstraction (Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth 2001; Haslam, 2002).

As Roberts and Donahue (1996) found in their research, the majority of the participants in the current research study constructed themselves as being different in the different contexts they perceived as existing in their lives, to a greater or lesser extent, as is encouraged by the current culture, which, as Nippert-Eng (1996) suggests, influences people to view identity-segmentation as the norm. There were a minority of participants who described themselves as being the 'same person' in each of the different perceived contexts in their lives. This could be seen as a contradiction as these participants perceive different contexts within their lives yet describe themselves as unchanging across these contexts. However, if one considers Nippert-Eng's (1996) integration-segmentation continuum, with individuals having a preference for either psychologically, and perhaps physically and/or temporally, segregating or integrating the perceived contexts in their lives, this potential contradiction lessens. While a minority of the participants occupied a point closer to the integration end of this continuum none had taken that integration to a point where

their lives had come to be interpreted though the use of one amalgamous identity. This preference for identity-segregation or identity-integration influences how the individual engages in processes of identity-management, as it will fundamentally alter how the individual perceives him/herself.

The way in which the participants in the current research study described their identity-portfolios also corresponds with the way in which theorists such as Beaumeister (1987) and Cote (1996) describe identity in Western culture in the current sociohistorical context. The participants principally describe themselves as individuals, rather than as group members, which is in accordance with the current Western cultural view of the individual.

17.3.1. General-identity

Eighteen participants were easily able to perceive a non-context-specific 'part' to their identity-portfolio, termed here as their general-identity (see figure 94). This research finding is in accordance with Roberts and Donahue's (1994), in that they found that their participants produced general self-descriptors when asked about who they were in general or overall. This sense that the participants had of themselves in general, or their sense of 'who they are' overall, provided them with a positively regarded, self-fulfilling template (Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Leonard, Beauvais and Scholl, 1999; Whitbourne, Sneed and Skultety, 2002), which provided a "sense of continuity across the complexities of context and changes of time" in terms of their general self-perceptions (Damon and Hart, 1988, pp. 2). This can be seen, in the current research study, in the way participants described their general-identity as being "a step back" from who they are in specific contexts, as something that "builds
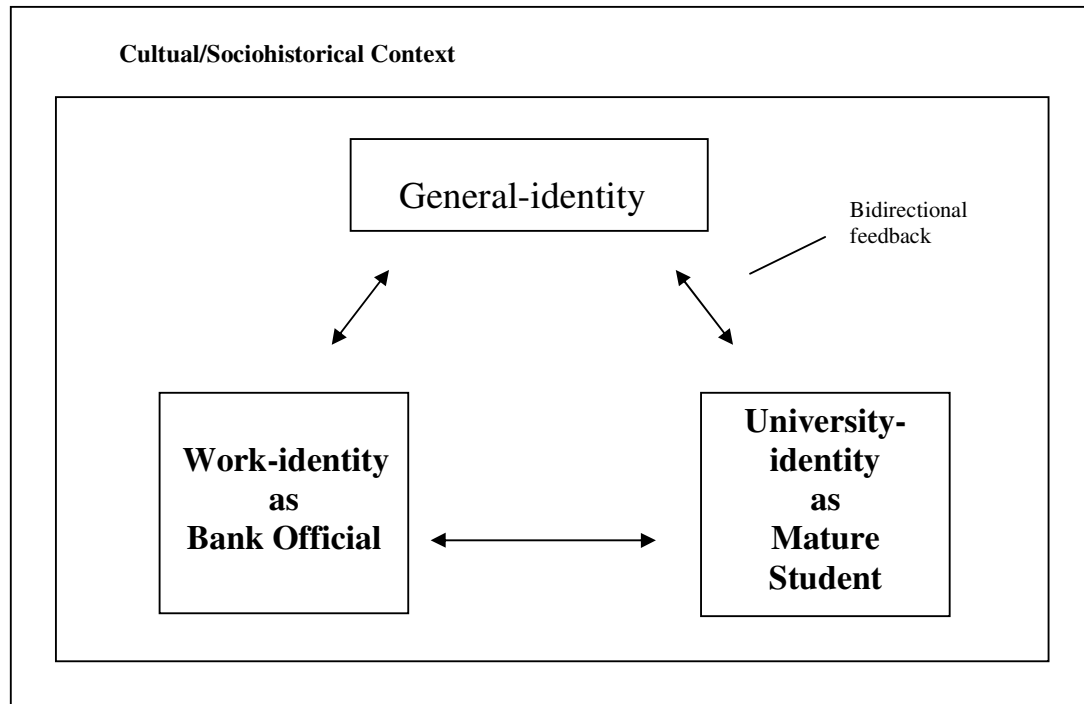
Figure 94. Identity-portfolio where general-identity is perceived as a distinct, non-context-specific-identity

the base that the other categories" in their life exist on or something that allows one to look at oneself "from the outside".

Feeling that one is isolated from the specific contexts in one's life, or from the individuals that populate those contexts, was constructed, by the participants, as facilitating access to the general-identity. This would facilitate access to the general-identity by reducing the possibility of external identity-cues causing an identity-change to a context-specific-identity (Ashforth et al, 2000; Cote, 1996; Davies 2007; Elsbach, 2004; Forehand, Deshapande and Reed 2002; Kroger and Adair, 2008; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Van Halen and Janssen, 2004). The other participants, while they did not engage with the general-identity concept directly, were readily able to perceive a context or contexts in their life where they felt 'most like themselves', for example 'family', 'friends' or 'religion'. These participants readily perceived how this

being 'most like themselves' was different from the experience of being in other contexts in their lives (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Roberts and Donahue, 1994). This depiction of the general-identity as residing close to or within a particular context would be expected, from a reading of the literature, where a highly salient, valued context-specific-identity has fed back to the general-identity to such an extent that the context-specific-identity has become interwoven with the general-identity (see figure 95) (Leonard et al, 1999). An example of this from the research results was, as can be seen in figure 95, where certain female participants' general-identities were tightly interwoven with their context-specific-identity as a homemaker/parent. In such cases a participant can be seen as having become "psychologically intertwined" with a particular context (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, pp. 21) where they may feel they have a "merged identity" (Goldstein and Cialdini, 2007, pp. 403) with other context-members that is psychologically meaningful for them (Haslam, 2002).

Cultual/Sociohistorical Context

General-identity

Interwoven with

Homemaker/ Parent-identity

In

Family Context

Bidirectional feedback

Mature Student-identity In University Context
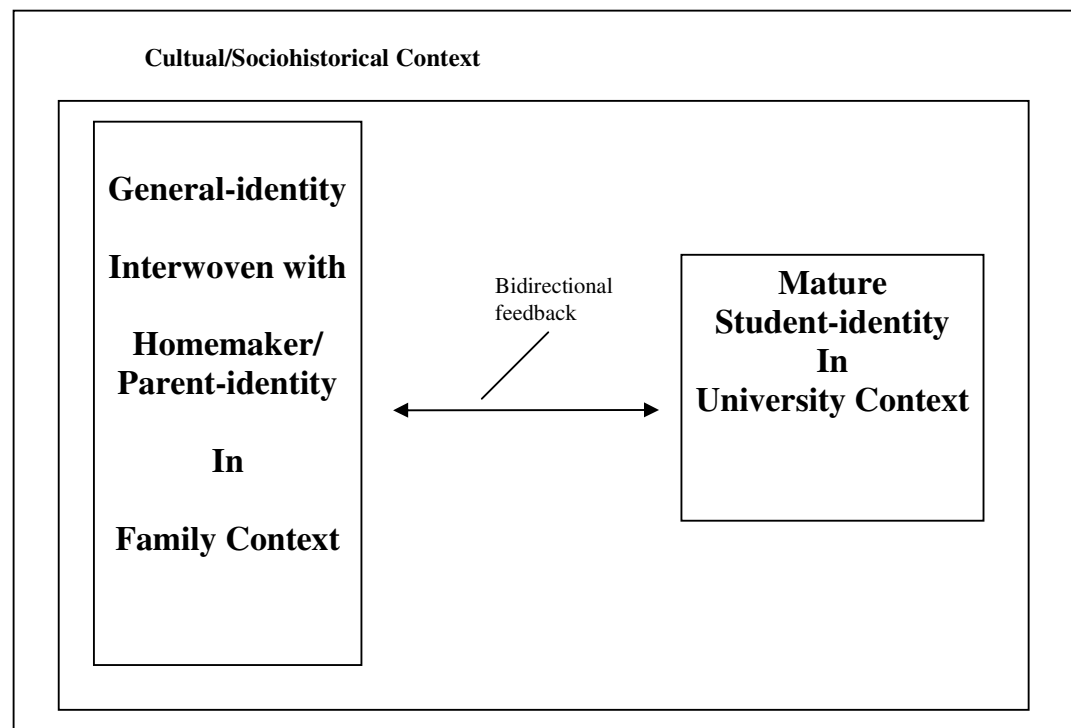
Figure 95. Identity-portfolio where general-identity is perceived as being interwoven with a highly salient context-specific-identity

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A participant's general-identity provided input into the exact formation of the context-specific-identity they created for the new university context, and it is this that gave the individual their sense of continuity across different contexts, and time (Leonard et al, 1999). This could also be described in terms of the participants bringing enduring aspects of him/herself into the creation of a new situated story regarding 'who they are' (Brim, 1968, cited in Beyer and Hannah, 2002; McLean et al, 2007). This can be clearly identified where those participants who explicitly described utilising previously salient self-perceptions, such as their work ethic or acting techniques, in the creation and management of their new context-specific-identity. This is caused by the self-fulfilling nature of the general-identity, as the participants' perceptions of and experiences in the new context were constrained by their existing perceptions (Adams and Marshall, 1996; Ashforth, 2001; Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Haslam, 2002; Leonard et al, 1999; McLean et al, 2007). However, just as previously created context-specific-identities had strong effects on the participants' identity-portfolios, for example the significant impact for certain participants of creating a homemaker/parent-identity, as the participants remained in and developed their context-specific-identity for the university context it provided input back to the general-identity that then began to change that general-identity (Leonard et al, 1999). The extent to which this occurred will have depended on the salience of the university-context for that participant, relative to the salience of other context-specific-identities in the participant's identity-portfolio (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980; 1986; Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Ashforth, 2001). For some participants, for example P3, their new university-identity gave them a new,

highly valued context-specific-identity that was then used as a guide for how they saw themselves overall.

16.3.2. Identity-hierarchy

In the majority of instances participants perceived that some contexts existing in their life, and hence some of their context-specific-identities, were more subjectively important to them than others (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980; 1986; Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Ashforth, 2001). In accordance with previous theory and research, the subjective importance (Ashforth, 2001), of a specific context-specific-identity appeared to be a function of that participant's social and emotional commitment to that context-specific-identity (Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stryker, 1987; Van Dick et al, 2004). These participants were readily able to place these contexts in an order of importance, reflecting the place within their identity-hierarchy that each of their context-specific-identity resides, based on its salience to the participant. This research finding fits well with previous research on identity-hierarchy in the area of symbolic interactionism, for example Stryker (1980; 1987) and Stryker and Serpe (1982), and also with the research findings of Roberts and Donahue (1994) who found that their participants not only saw themselves differently in each of their roles but, on particular attributes, rated themselves higher in some roles than others. In the current research study there were a minority of instances where two or more contexts, and their context-specific-identities, were perceived as existing at the same level of importance by a participant (which Stryker and Serpe [1994] describe as a possibility that "should be recognized explicitly" [pp. 17]). For example, P8 perceived all the

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contexts in her life as equally important in that they represented, for her, the parts of a system where all parts were needed in order for the whole to function.

The research findings that emerged from the current research study regarding identity-hierarchy should not be viewed as essential or 'real', but viewed in their sociohistorical context. The way in which individuals in Western culture currently view themselves is influenced by current trends that encourage the fragmentation of identity-structure in response to the multitude of contexts, and types of contexts, an individual can be exposed to (Baumeister, 1987; Cote, 1996; Cote and Levine, 2002). In different sociohistorical periods, where individuals lived within more singular social contexts, it may have been easier for an individual to create a narrative about themselves involving the utilisation of a singular fixed identity.

16.3.2.1. Family-identity in the Identity-hierarchy

Context-specific-identities relating to participants' families (original, marital or both) were perceived by the majority of the participants as being their most subjectively important (Ashforth, 2001) context-specific-identity. This is in accordance with the wealth of existing research that has a focus on the family context, for example the work-family literature (Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001), or developmental/lifespan literature (Harter, 1999; Lachman, 2004) which emphasises the impact that the family context has on the individual across the lifespan. The results from the current research study reinforce the view that a family-identity is commonly present in an individual's identity-portfolio and that an individual's family-identity is typically a highly salient identity to which the individual is strongly committed. However, there were exceptions to this tendency in the current research study, as there

were a minority of participants who placed the family context very low in their order of importance due to, for example, turbulent relations with other family members.

It must be noted here that the way in which the participants in the current research study view family contexts is likely to be impacted by the sociohistorical context in which they, and their families, exist. The definition of 'family' in the current sociohistorical context is contested, in that the term family can be applied to a variety of family types, for example stereotypical nuclear families, more extended families or single parent families. Family, in the current sociohistorical context, is also commonly seen as a context in itself that supports its members in terms of providing intimacy and emotional support, and as separate from other contexts such as work contexts. Before the industrial revolution family and work would commonly have been the same context and the family would have been recognised as an economic unit (Fredrikson-Goldson and Scharlach, 2001; Campbell-Clarke, 2000).

16.3.2.2. University-identity in the Identity-hierarchy

The university context rose dramatically, between time one and time two of the research study, in its subjective important (Ashforth, 2001) for the participants. This is reflected in many of the participants' narratives (McAdams, 2001), which will be discussed below. This is an important point as the creation, development and management of the participants' context-specific-identities for the university context is a central point of focus in the current research study. As the participants engaged in the identity-work (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) necessary to create a university-identity, investing themselves, their time and their effort in the university context, the salience of the university-identity for the participants tended to increase, as

represented by it's location in the participants identity-hierarchies (Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stryker, 1987; Van Dick et al, 2004).

16.3.2.3. The General-identity in the Identity-hierarchy

The participants' conceptualisations of their general-identity, a non-context-specific 'part' of themselves, or which contexts they felt represented 'who they are' best, were explored in the interview and were not placed in the participants' orders of importance during completion of the LDSB. Therefore, it is initially difficult for determinations to be made on the general-identity's place within a participant's identity-hierarchy, based solely on the LDSB results relating to descriptions of the participant's identity-hierarchy.

Within the existing literature the general-identity is placed at the top of the identity-hierarchy. The general-identity is an individual's first identity and exists, normatively, across different contexts in the individual's life and across their lifespan (Leonard et al, 1999; McLean et al, 2007). An identity's place in the identity-hierarchy is defined by the likelihood that it will be invoked in a given situation (Stryker, 1980; Serpe, 1987). As the general-identity is defined as existing across or imputing into all the different contexts in the individual's life, as it is non-context-specific, giving the individual a sense of continuity across situations and time (Epstein, 1980, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999; Damon and Hart, 1988; Roberts and Donahue, 1994) it would therefore be located at the top of the identity-hierarchy as it is utilised in every context, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the 'strength' of the specific context. Given that participants describe the non-context-specific 'part' of themselves as being a place from where they observe or manage the different contexts in their lives, for example P24 describing the non-context-specific

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part of her life as "the base that the other categories are on it's like a chain reaction", there is evidence, emerging from this research study, that corresponds to the conceptualisation of the identity-hierarchy as being headed by an individual's general-identity, with each of the individual's context-specific-identities below (see table 22).

16.3.3. Stability of the Identity-portfolio over Time

At time two of the research study there was little reported change in the overall structure of the contexts the participants perceived as existing in their lives, and hence in their identity-portfolio, in comparison with what had been reported at time one of the research study. This highlights the majority of the participants' ability to engage in the identity-work necessary to maintain the perceptual stability of their identity-portfolio by preserving the coherence and continuity of their self-perceptions (Ashforth, 2001; Damon and Hart, 1988; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) even in a turbulent period of identity-creation where the participant's life was changing, as they began a university course. This is similar to Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) research findings, where a senior manager utilised a "narrative self-identity" that was integrative and meaningful to provide overarching structure and stability during a time of change and conflict in one specific context, that is to say the work/organisational context.

16.3.4. Future-identity-structures

The participants not only constructed themselves in terms of those self-perceptions pertaining to the present but also in terms of the different forms their identity-portfolio might take in the future, the different future-identity-structures they

perceived as being possible (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Markus and Wurf, 1987; Reisman, 1961 cited in Leonard et al, 1999; Schlenker, 1985 cited in Leonard et al, 1999; Weinreich, 2003). The participant's possible, future-identity-structures were constructed in terms of who the individual wanted to become in the future, both in general and in specific contexts, and also who they wished not to become in terms of those future-identity-structures with which they disidentified (Ashforth, 2001; Haslam, 2003; Hewitt and Genest, 1990; Hodges, 1998; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004; Ogilvie, 1987). Dissonance (Festinger, 1957) was described as having occurred, for the participants, where a significant gap existed between their perceptions of their present, or the future that they perceived will emerge from that present, and the participant's desired future-identity-structure. This identity-struggle (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) was constructed as contributing to P5 and P21's decision to exit the university context, as they couldn't reconcile their current perceptions with the future-identity-structures to which they aspired.

A participant's future-identity-structure was affected by their age/point in the lifespan, as would be expected from a reading of the existing literature. Younger mature students described complex future-identity-structures involving the establishment or betterment of careers, house ownership, travelling and meeting a significant other/finding love. This focus on 'finding love' is a product of the current, or at least recent, sociohistorical context where love is seen as a primary basis for marriage and a possible source of personal fulfilment (Beaumeister, 1987; Hendrick and Hendrick, 1983). Those participants who were older described future-identity-structures that were more modest and concrete (Berk, 1998). These participants, depending on their personal circumstances, were in university with future goals relating either to the betterment of their career (Berk, 1998; O'Connor, 1987, cited in

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Seifert et al, 2000), in a concrete sense, to fulfil other specific goals such as aiding a child with their career or to gain a third level qualification for the sake of that intellectual endeavour (Berk, 1998; Campbell et al, 1980, cited in Seifert et al, 2000; Havighurst, 1972, cited in Schaie and Willis, 1996; Seifert et al, 2000).

16.3.5. Identity as a Source of Motivation

The participants constructed their identities as a source of motivation for their decisions and behaviour (Barbuto and Scholl, 1998; Leonard et al, 1999). Due to the fact that different identities, the utilisation of which is a function of context, bring with them different sets of needs (Haslam, 2001), the participants were motivated to utilise different behaviours, goals, interpersonal styles, language etc. in order to meet those needs (Haslam, 2002; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Leonard et al, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996). For example participants described interacting differently with members of their family than with others in the university context.

Participants described their decision to return to university as mature students as being due to the fact that university was a vehicle that would facilitate the maintenance of their currently held self-perceptions, and also move them towards future goals, connected with desired future-identity-structures (Ashforth, 2001; Gecas, 1982, cited in Leonard et al, 1999; Haslam, 2001; Korman, 1970, cited in Leonard et al, 1999; McLean et al, 2007). In essence their decisions were based on ensuring that there would be continuity and coherence between their view of themselves in the past, the present and how they wished to be in the future (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Weinreich, 2003).

In terms of the context category motivators presented in chapter eleven, based on data from the participants' LDSBs, the overall trends shown there were reflective

of the data from the participants' narratives. These trends often correspond with what one would expect from a reading of Barbuto and Scholl's (1998) and Leonard et al's (1999) work. For example, the social, friends, and pastimes context categories were all dominated by the intrinsic motivator, indicating a focus on fun and enjoying oneself. Half the participants' dominant motivational sources for the work context category were made up of the extrinsic motivational source, indicating a focus on materialistic reward. This corresponds with a common participant narrative that constructed work as chiefly a source of money, the possession of which was necessary for the running of the participant's life.

16.3.5.1. The Impact of the Identity-creation Process on Reported Dominant Motivational Sources

Approximately a third of the participants at time one, when participants were experiencing entry shock and anxiety related to their recent entry into the university context (Hughes, 1958, cited in Louis, 1980; Louis, 1980; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992), described themselves as being motivated, in the university context, by a need to gain approval from their family and feeling that they had to prove themselves. At time two, when many participants had overcome their earlier anxieties, had settled into the university context and had done enough conscious identity-work to create a stable context-specific-identity (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), the majority of these participants no longer described themselves as being motivated by a need to gain approval or prove themselves. This represented the biggest change, in terms of motivation related trends, between time one and time two of the research study. These participants reconstructed their families as sources of support and encouragement rather than people whose approval they needed. They

reconstructed themselves as being more focused on internal standards, or their own values, rather than external ones. This indicates that an individual's motivation for a particular context may change over a relatively short period of time (six to seven months) as the individual's identity develops and changes within that context, as was described in the current research study where participants progressed through the identity-creation process and changed from being newcomers to insiders in the university context.

16.3.5.2. Motivation with regard to the Family-identity

The majority of participants chose the goal-internalisation motivational source as their dominant motivator for the family context. This indicates a focus on achieving the goals of the family and of a focus on the values and beliefs the participant holds with regard to their family. This choice of the goal-internalisation motivational source can be seen as part of the process through which societal/cultural norms are passed on through families, which represent the normative primary reference groups in an individual's early socialisation (Harter, 1999; McLean et al, 2007; Mortimer, Lorence and Kumka, 1986). The participants are motivated by the achievement of the goals of the family, as encouraged by societal norms and expectations.

16.3.5.3. Motivation with regard to the University-identity

In terms of the university context category the majority of participants chose the internal-self-concept motivational source as their dominant motivator. This can be seen as corresponding with the fact that the participants choose to become mature students and enter the university context, and did so in order to achieve goals that

were personally important to them. What was important to them depended on whether they were younger participants who were focused on the advancement of their careers and therefore the betterment of their lives (Seifert et al, 2000), or older participants who constructed their goals as being related to personal achievement for its own sake, in terms of receiving a third level education or obtaining a university degree (Berk, 1998; Campbell et al, 1980, cited in Seifert et al, 2000; Havighurst, 1972, cited in Schaie and Willis, 1996; Seifert et al, 2000).

16.3.5.4. Motivation with regard to the General-identity

A participant's general-identity can be seen as a source of motivation for that participant's behaviour, as they are motivated to maintain and enhance their internalized view of themselves, both in terms of their current self-perceptions and in terms of who they wish to become (Ashforth, 2001; Gecas, 1982, cited in Leonard et al, 1999; Haslam, 2001; Korman, 1970, cited in Leonard et al, 1999; McLean et al, 2007). The results that emerged in this research study support this existing view in that the most commonly chosen dominant motivational source for the general-identity was the internal-self-concept motivational source, indicating a focus on achieving internally set goals. The second most common motivational source for the general-identity was the goal-internalisation motivational source, indicating a similar focus of wanting to achieve the goals set by the individual in terms of their life overall, but more specifically in terms of living up to the participant's own values and beliefs (Barbuto and Scholl, 1998; Leonard et al, 1999).

16.3.6. Summary

In relation to sub-question one of the research question (Can an individual's identity be described as an identity-structure being divided up into a non-context-specific-identity and a number of context-specific-identities?) the results pertaining to the participants in this research study indicate that a participant's multidimensional identity-structure, or identity-portfolio, can be seen as being divided up into a number of context-specific-identities, which the participant is readily able to identify, and a non-context-specific-identity (the participant's general-identity). These elements of a participant's identity-portfolio may be seen as existing in an identity-hierarchy, with the general-identity at the top of this hierarchy with the context-specific-identities below, organised according to their salience to the participant. The identity-portfolio is influenced not only by the participant's perceptions of themselves in the present but also by their perceptions of their desired future-identity-structures. The identity-portfolio, as described above, is a source of motivation for the participant, as they are motivated to maintain, and enhance, their view of themselves, both in general and in specific contexts.

16.4. The Creation of a Context-specific-identity: Construction of Overarching Narratives
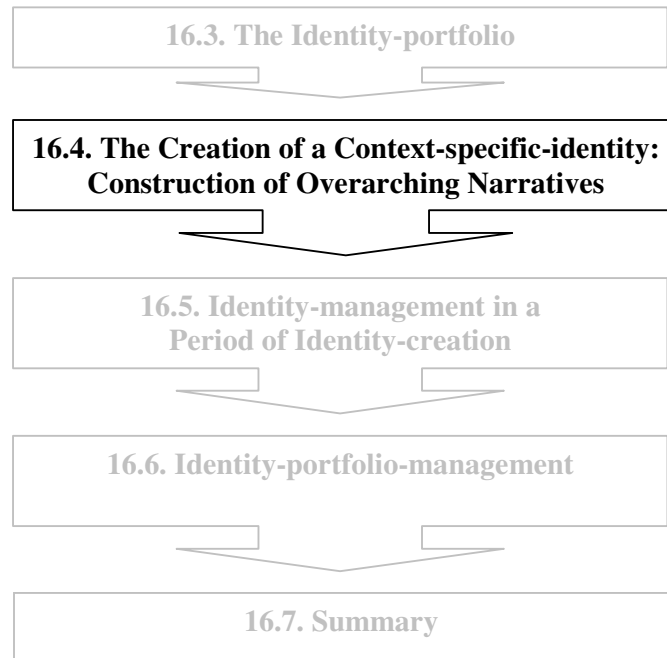
Figure 96. The structure of chapter sixteen: 16.4. The creation of a context-specific-identity: Construction of overarching narratives

A significant portion of the identity-work carried out by the participants at time one consisted of constructing narratives that maintained their sense of coherence and continuity (see figure 96). As Weick (1996) states "an individual must articulate a narrative thread that connects possibly disparate experiences into a coherent story about themselves". These narratives were used, by the participants, in an attempt to manage the identity-creation process by producing a coherent, overarching narrative that moved from how their lives used to be to their entry into the university context. This corresponds with Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) research, which illustrated how a "self-identity narrative" can act as a stabilising force, and with Roberts and

Donahue's (1994) similar finding that cross-role consistencies in an individual's self-conceptions allow an individual to bring coherence to their many social roles. These narratives, where they were successfully created, provided the participants with a sense of consistency and coherency in terms of their identity-portfolio, even though their identity-portfolio was based on "an amalgam of multiple, diverse and sometimes contradictory narratives" (Musson and Duberley, 2007, pp. 147). This narrative was utilised to explain how the participant was going about the necessary work of adding a new context-specific-identity to their identity-portfolio (see figure 97). The construction of overarching identity-creation narratives was influenced by day-to-day identity management processes, which will be discussed in the next subsection of this chapter. It is the day-to-day events in the individual's life, along with how the individual deals with them, that must be incorporated into the overarching narratives the individual uses to retain a consistent and coherent identity-portfolio. The overarching narratives created during the identity-creation and development process are influenced by the degree of proactive identity-work the individual carries out, and also any difficulties that impede the individual's ability to engage in identity-work. Depending on each participant's circumstances, they placed themselves in one of three narratives. The majority of participants constructed narratives of having created a relatively stable, functional context-specific-identity for the university context. A minority of participants constructed narratives of dysfunction that involved an intention to remain in the university context due to their commitment to a future-identity-structure that required them to continue in the university, but these
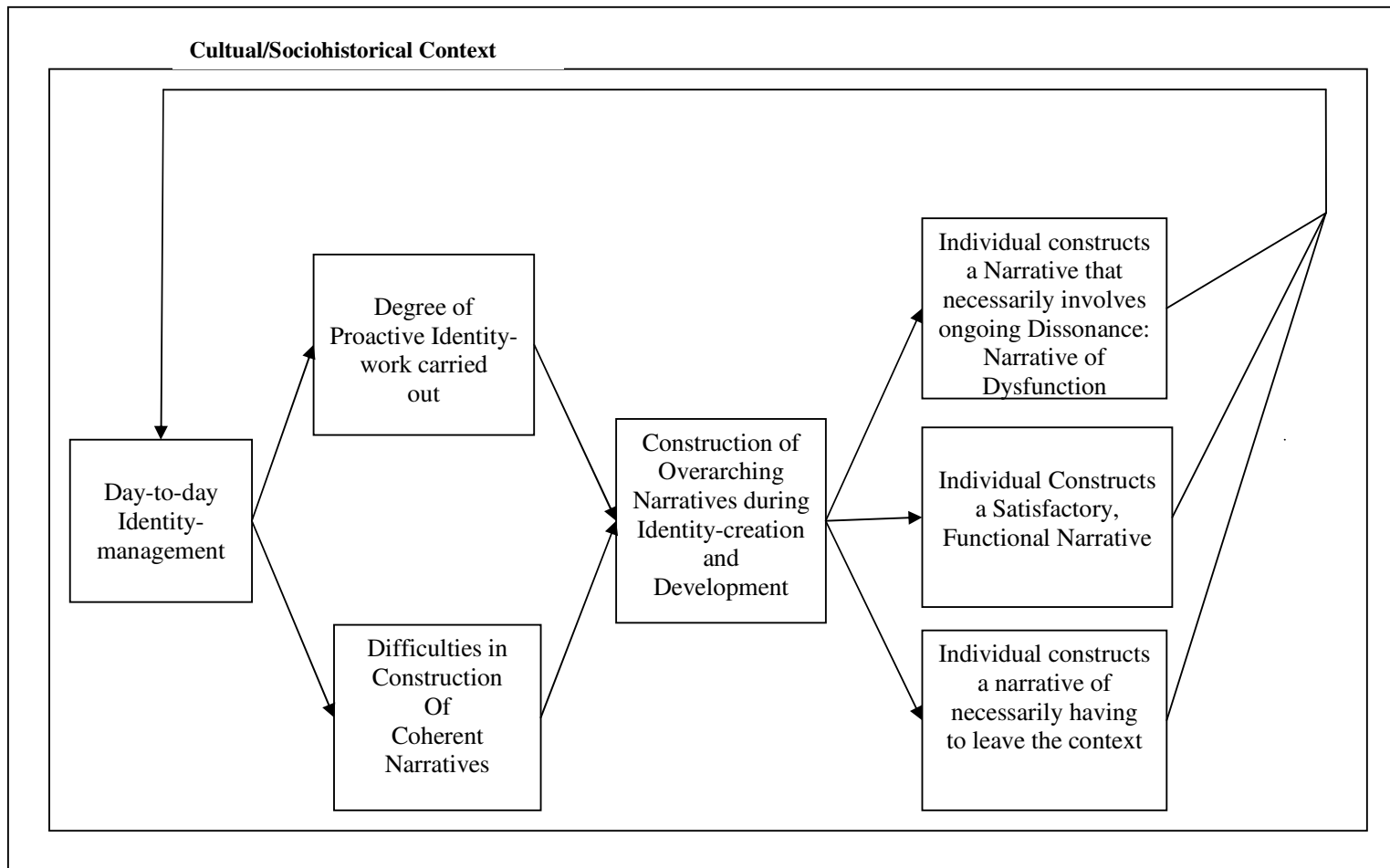
Figure 97. Development of overarching narratives during identity-creation

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participants were experiencing ongoing dissonance for which they had no effective solution. Another minority of participants constructed narratives of necessarily having to leave the university context due to ongoing dissonance and in order that they might return their identity-portfolio to a state where its coherency could be restored. These two minority narratives are reminiscent of Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) finding that while an identity-narrative can be a stabilising force, it can also fuel fragmentation and conflict, depending on the circumstances of the individual.

Many participants gave their entry into the university context meaning through the utilisation of metaphors such as 'being on the path' from a point in their past to a point in their future. This identity-work was affected by the participants age/point in life-stage development, and common occurrences seen here included changing from primarily utilising a work-identity to primarily utilising a mature student-identity (either temporarily or permanently) and changing from primarily utilising a homemaker/parent-identity to utilising a mature student-identity. At time two of the research study many participants, even when asked specifically to recount their circumstances at time one, sought to move beyond the confines of that questioning and produced a narrative that would connect 'who they were' at time one and time two in a seamless narrative. This research finding is supported by Smith's (1994) research on self-reconstruction, where participants were found to produce reconstructive narratives by glossing over difficulties, emphasising personal growth and highlighting continuity of identity.

The interpersonal relationships the participants developed in the university context influenced the form taken by their overarching identity-creation narratives, as other context-members were a source of feedback and, if that feedback is positive, a

source of social validation of their new context-specific-identity. These interpersonal relationships can be in terms of those relationships, groups or social networks that the participant co-created with other context-members with whom they identify, or at least with whom they co-create a group with, and also those context-members in the groups prescribed by the university context, such as classes and tutorials. Previous research supports this finding, as social identification has been linked to how stressful an individual perceives a situation or context to be (Haslam et al, 2005) and their willingness to engage in citizenship behaviour (Haslam et al, 2000).

16.4.1. Overcoming Initial Anxiety

At time one the majority of participants described experiencing anxiety that was in accordance with the descriptions, in the existing literature, of entry-shock, reality shock (Hughes, 1958, cited in Louis, 1980), entry stress (Wanous, 1992) and surprise (Louis, 1980). Those participants who did not construct themselves as experiencing a great deal of entry shock tended to describe themselves as having realistic expectations of what the university context was going to be like due to having previous life experience of similar educational or occupational contexts (Feldman and Arnold, 1978, cited in Cable and Parsons, 2001), or who had proactively prepared themselves, in a realistic manner, prior to entering the university context. How this initial anxiety was overcome, or not overcome, became a significant part of participants' narratives at time two, as negative or disruptive experiences are especially useful in the construction of narratives (McLean et al, 2007). The participants utilised narratives of overcoming anxiety, for example by becoming more accustomed to the university context and forming social networks, to illustrate their move from being outsiders to newcomers to insiders (Katz, 1980, cited in Ashforth

and Saks, 1996) as they overcame what was initially perceived as strange and shocking and turned it into an ordinary part of their daily lives (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al, 2000; Schmid and Jones, 1993, cited in Ashforth, 2001).

16.4.2. Exiting a Context before Entering the University Context

While all the participants were having to re-structure their lives to some extent, many of the participants were not only entering the university context but had also recently exited or were in the process of exiting a context which had up until then represented a highly salient context within their life. These participants were not only involved in the identity-work of creating a new context-specific-identity, and accommodating that identity within their pre-existing identity-portfolio, but also involved in the identity-work of leaving behind, to a greater or lesser extent, an identity that was, or had been, centrally placed in their conceptualisation of 'who they are'. This was a difficult process for the participants involved.

What must be noted here is that this process may not only involve the leaving behind, or downgrading in importance, of a particular context-specific-identity. Where the context-specific-identity in question has previously had a significant impact on the participant's general-identity (Leonard et al, 1999), the leaving behind of that context-specific-identity will also necessitate a redefining or re-structuring of that participant's general sense of 'who they are' (their general-identity). The more salient or subjectively important the context-specific-identity, the more difficult the experience of leaving that context-specific-identity behind will be for the participant (Ashforth, 2001; Stryker and Serpe, 1982; Stryker, 1987; Van Dick et al, 2004; Zedeck and Mosier, 1990, cited in Morrell et al, 2004). The most common changes made by these participants were those from 'being a worker' or 'being a

homemaker/parent' (these participants were all female) to 'being a mature student'. Some participants described bringing elements of their previous context-specific-identity with them into the university context and utilising these as identity-resources, especially where the context-specific-identity had been a highly salient one (Duberley et al, 2006).

16.4.2.1. Exiting a Work Context

At time one over half of the participants constructed themselves as being involved in a change from worker to mature student, in that the primary focus of their lives was changing from 'going to work' to 'going to university'. It would be expected that many participants would report such a change, as work contexts are a dominant part of people's lives in Western society in the current sociohistorical context (Berk, 1998; Frydenberg and Lewis, 2002; Seifert et al, 2000). Many of these participants continued to work while in university, but this work was no longer their primary focus. The experience accumulated by the participants in their previous work was perceived as something they could carry with them into the new context and utilise as an identity-resource (Haslam, 2002), resulting in some participants treating university as if it were a job. At time two this narrative was continued by a small number of participants who utilised the narrative to show that they had moved away from, or were in the process of moving away from, their previously utilised work-identity to engage more fully with their new context-specific-identity as mature students.

16.4.2.2. Exiting a Family Context

The majority of those participants who described making a change from being primarily concerned with the care and upkeep of their families/family homes constructed themselves as being at the 'empty nest' stage or close to it, with their children being old enough for these participants to perceive that there was a reduction in their responsibilities as a homemaker/parent. These participants were all women, which reinforces the literature that highlights the historical, societally reinforced gender stereotype of women as caregivers and homemakers (Fredrikson-Goldon et al, 2001, pp.67; Martins et al, 2002; Gallaway and Bernasek, 2002; Cutler and Jackson, 2002; Dessing, 2001; and Noor, 2002). The existing literature also indicates that these participants may have decided to attend university in order to proactively or reactively deal with feelings of loneliness caused by the 'empty-nest' (Golan, 1981; Schaie and Willis, 1996; Seifert et al, 2000). By implication these participants are indicating that becoming a mature student would not have been something they would have taken up when their children were younger and their perceived family responsibilities greater. Those participants who had primarily been homemakers/parents for a long period of time before deciding to become mature students described the university context as alien to them. They also identified feelings of insecurity in this new environment. This insecurity can be seen as arising from the fact that these participants do not have many comparable previous experiences upon which to base their expectations of what the university context will be like (Feldman and Arnold, 1978, cited in Cable and Parsons, 2001; Louis, 1980). However, these participants still tended to carry part of their homemaker/parent-identity with them as they created a mature student-identity in the university context. For example, one participant described how she felt pressure to succeed educationally in order that she would not lose the authority to demand

educational success from her children. These participants also treated/referred to the younger students as children/as being similar to their children and/or perceived that the younger students saw them as mothers or mother figures. These participants' perceptions of continuing demands made on them by their families, especially their children, caused these participants to experience a great deal of dissonance (Festinger, 1957) as they attempted to create and maintain a mature student-identity. At time two these participants were split between those that constructed themselves as having successfully created a stable context-specific-identity that allowed them to adjust to their life in the university context and be able to accommodate the continuing pressures from the family context, and those participants who still wished to keep the family context/their homemaker/parent-identity as their top priority in life, rather than bend to the pressures emanating from the university context. One participant in the latter category ultimately decided to leave the university as an ultimate means of resolving this conflict.

It is clear that for some participants the change from a previously held, dominant identity to the newer mature student-identity, or at least the change from a situation where the previously held identity was their primary focus to a situation where it is not, continued well into their socialisation/identity-creation process (Louis, 1980). The worker and homemaker/parent identities were used by the participants to subjectively contrast the old and the new, as the older identity was used as an anchor in analysing and interpreting their experiences in the new university context.

16.4.3. Being 'On the Path' to the University Context

The university context was constructed in different ways by the participants. The participants associated the university context with particular work contexts or

constructed it as a stepping-stone from past work to future work. The university context was constructed as being part of a newcomer discourse (Duberley et al, 2006) or narrative (McLean et al, 2007) about the participant's personal history with education and future educational outcomes, and was also constructed as a site for socialising and creating friendships. The participants constructed themselves as being involved in a change from previous 'ways of being', such as being a worker or a homemaker/parent, to a new 'way of being' as a mature student. The participants utilised certain metaphors to create these identity-creation narratives, which brought together their past, present and future in a coherent and consistent set of perceptions (McLean et al, 2007; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).This is a similar research finding to that of Pratt et al (2006), who found that different types of medical residents utilised different metaphors, for example 'primary care physician' or 'boot camp surgeon' in their self-definition. One metaphor used by the participants in the current research study to explain their choice to become a mature student was that of being 'on the path' to becoming a mature student from a point in the past to the present and forward into the future. This type of narrative was used to justify the participants' choice to become a mature student as inevitable and appropriate. The older mature students were more likely to construct themselves as being 'on the path' to educational achievement for its own sake rather than the younger mature students who constructed themselves as being 'on the path' to a desired way of life, a new career or to the betterment of a current one. This difference between younger and older mature students' narratives highlights the way in which the identity-creation processes occurs within a developmental context involving life-long processes of creating, developing, discarding and managing elements of one's identity-portfolio.

At time two of the research study there was a divide, in the participants' constructions, between descriptions of participant progression from time one to time two of the research study. Some participants included certain turning points, significant moments, landmarks or milestones, whether positive or negative (McLean et al, 2007; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), that the participant could point to as having influenced the identity-creation process, while other participants described their progression as a gradual progression from time one to time two.

16.4.3.1. Identity-creation Narratives utilising Landmarks/Milestones

The majority of the participants identified certain landmarks or turning points in their identity-creation narratives, such as the feedback received through, or along with, assignment and exam results, the establishment of social networks and friendships in the university context and in one case a period of self-reflection. The most important landmark described by the participants in university one was the impact that the academic results of semester one exams had on them, which were constructed by many as the definitive indication of whether they were 'sinking or swimming' within the university context. This reflects the emphasis, in the existing literature, on the importance of feedback in terms of identity-creation, identity-development and identity-management (Harter, 1999; Jones, 1990; Leonard et al, 1999). Feedback given early on can reduce the possibility of organisational entrants making inaccurate attributions or unhelpful evaluations about aspects of the context, those around them or themselves and also increased the entrants' understanding of the context and the processes by which evaluations are made within it (Louis, 1980). The majority of the participants were eventually able to reconstruct their earlier anxieties as unfounded and reconstruct themselves as able students, while P5 constructed her

poor exam results as the final indication that she should not remain in university one. In the case of P5, attaining more information and/or feedback about her academic performance did not result in a sense of compatibility between P5 and the context, but rather it facilitated perceptions of how she was not fitting in. While the participants in university two responded similarly, in terms of utilising and valuing feedback, in relation to the continuous assessment results they had received between time one and time two of the research study, they were waiting until their summer exams, which would be their first official, university exams, for that definitive indication that they belonged, or not, in the university context.

16.4.3.2. Identity-creation Narratives of Gradual Progression

A minority of participants produced narratives that described a gradual progression from time one to time two of the research study. However, those who described such a gradual progression can be further split between those participants who described a clear gradual progression, and those participants who initially described a gradual progression but then also described certain turning points within the gradual progression narrative. This indicates the different ways in which a narrative can be built up by a participant, and the different functions the same type of events can fulfil in individualised narratives, which exist to customise the participant's "situated story" (McLean et al, 2007) in terms of their context-specific-identity created for the university context.

Participants identified perceived turning points or landmarks between time one and time two as leaps forward in their narrative that served as explanations for changes in their identity-portfolio during this time. Others placed these turning points or landmarks within a narrative that emphasised a gradual progression, which would

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then emphasise the consistency of their identity-portfolio during this time. And finally a small number of participants constructed a narrative that did not include any turning points and heavily emphasised a gradual progression from time one to time two of the research study.

16.4.4. Organisational Socialisation by the University Context

The socialisation tactics utilised by the context into which an individual is entering can have a significant impact on the form that individual's identity-creation narrative, and subsequent context-specific-identity, takes. It is through the process by which the participants were socialised into the university context that they acquired, or not, the attitudes, behaviours and knowledge needed to participate as functioning member of the university context (Bauer et al, 1998; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Although the participants described a certain degree of organised socialisation within the university context, for example the mature student summer school in university one, the participants' descriptions generally indicated that the socialisation tactics utilised by the university context fell more towards the individualised rather than the institutional end of the continuum (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Cable and Parsons, 2001; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Wheeler, 1966). The participants' descriptions indicate that they perceived they had the freedom to choose the type of student they wished to be, within the restrictions of the existing university context structures and prescribed groups, for example participant classes and tutorials. There was no explicit "discourse of participation" (Musson and Duberley, 2007) offered to the participants. The university context did not appear, in the participant's constructions, to wish to strongly exploit or influence their identity-work during the socialisation/identity-creation process. Beyond the pre-existing structure of the

university, the courses on which the participants were enrolled, the mature student summer school in university one, and the course-specific orientation the participants went through, the general sense from the participants was that of being left to 'sink or swim' by the university once they had moved beyond the beginning of the academic year. The existing literature indicates that organisational contexts that engage in the use of secrecy norms, the sink-or-swim, learn-on-your-own philosophy, and sanctions against sharing information among members of a particular context are dysfunctional for entrants as well as for the context itself (Louis, 1980).

16.4.4.1. Mature Student Summer School in University One

The mature student summer school in university one was described, by those participants who had attended, as being extremely useful and helpful in their entry into the university context. The participants described the summer school as providing them with helpful tips about the university and university life. It aided the participants in knowing who they were in the university context (Ashforth et al, 2008). The summer school helped ease the high level of anxiety being experienced by some participants by allowing them to see that others had the same fears and anxieties, and a small number of participants reported that it stopped them from exiting the university context due to the anxiety they were experiencing. The main reason provided by these participants for the mature student summer school's positive role in stopping their exit from the context was that it provided them with the opportunity to begin to socialise with other mature students. This early socialising opportunity was especially useful where participants were able to socialise with those other participants who would be studying on the same academic courses, before the start of the academic year/formal lectures when they would be mixed in with the younger students. These participants were able to begin co-creating psychologically

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meaningful groups/social networks (Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003) with other mature students with whom they identified (Alvesson, 2004; Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Campbell-Clark, 2000; Leonard et al, 1999). Such socialising aided the participants in their building of positive social networks, which in turn aided them in feeling that they could legitimately perceive themselves as part of the new university context. Those students in university one who did not attend the summer school, or who only attended part of it, regretted not attending and felt that they had missed out by not attending.

The mature student summer school encouraged the participants to identify themselves as mature students, and to identify with the other mature students. This mature student discourse was an implicit discourse provided by the Irish Education System and the universities themselves (Musson and Duberley, 2007), against which no participant rebelled as every participant defined themselves as mature students. In many cases participants formed groups with a 'strong', densely articulated collective, mature student-identity (Cole and Bruch, 2006; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). The mature student category is a minority category within the university as a whole, and as a category within many of the courses the participants were joining. As the participants were members of this demographically dissimilar category, from the majority 'younger students' category, in the university context this impedes the participants' social integration with context-members outside of the mature student category. This is perhaps due to how a salient dissimilarity may induce individuals in the university context to perceive each other in terms of the identity implied by such a dissimilarity and thus see members of the 'other' category as an out-group member (Jackson, Stone and Alverez, 1993, cited in Saks and Ashforth, 1997). Therefore, the university, and the Irish Education System, was encouraging the participants to

identify themselves as part of a minority, which may cause negative outcomes for participants, before they were actively socialised into their courses as student nurses, journalists etc.

16.4.4.2. Participant Involvement in Organically Created and Prescribed Groups

The identification contours (Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003) identified in the participants' constructions of their socialisations in the university context were complex as the participants co-created organic, psychologically meaningful groups with other context-members and also participated in groups prescribed by the university (Anderson and Thomas, 1996, cited in Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003). As highlighted in Saks and Ashforth's (1997) review article organisational socialisation should be characterised as involving 'multiplex' relationships, that is to say that the different groups provide multiple sources of influence on the participants' engagement with the identity-creation process.

Participants had differing approaches to building friendships and social networks within the university context. Some participants had pre-existing criteria by which they formed friendships/groups/social networks and proactively anticipated how they would do so. Other participants were reticent about forming any connection with others within the university context, and tended to hang back from socialising until they felt comfortable doing so. These differences seemed to be produced by the different self-perceptions and 'ways of being'/'ways of relating' with others that the participants brought with them from their previous life experience. This would represent part of the process whereby the participants pre-existing identity-portfolio, especially their general-identity, provides input into a new context-specific-identity (Leonard et al, 1999). However, these different approaches to socialisation were also

affected by events that took place within the university context. For example, at time two P13 had withdrawn somewhat from the social network she had built up due to a perceived conflict with another mature student who P13 described as being a central member of the group P13 had been a part of up until the time of that conflict.

16.4.4.3. Identifying with those that are Similar and Disidentifying with those that are Dissimilar

The majority of the participants constructed themselves as identifying with those they perceived as being similar to themselves. This is reflective of research in social psychology that has found that individuals are more likely to find those similar to them attractive, more likely to help those perceived as being similar, more likely to be persuaded by those perceived as similar and more likely to form groups with individuals perceived as similar (Aronson et al, 2005).

The principle, shared categorisation that participants described using in their identification with other context-members, in their formation of psychologically meaningful groups (Haslam, 2002, Haslam et al, 2003), was that of being a mature student, and within that category, the age/point in the lifespan at which the other individuals in that category are located. The most distinct "line of demarcation" (Campbell-Clark, 2000, pp. 756), in terms of the participants' identification contours within the university context, which was made by the majority of participants, was between the categories of mature student and younger student. These younger students were constructed as 'other', as members of an out-group that was extremely different from the members of the mature student category. As much as the participants' mature student-identity was created from the participants identifying themselves as mature students, a significant part of the mature student-identity, for the majority of the participants, came from a disidentification with the younger students.

The importance of this disidentification to the creation of the mature-student identity is reflected in other research studies that have found similar disidentification to be important to how an individual constructs themselves in a particular context. For example Hodge (1998) describes how disidentifying with her peers in a teacher training college, and failing to identify herself as a teacher, was a core part of her student-identity during her time in teacher training. This concept of disidentification has been successfully included in models of organisational identification (see Ashforth, 2001, Elsbach, 1999 and Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). The younger students were constructed by the participants as being inexperienced in life, in comparison with the life experience obtained by the participants, and as being immature. It was this perceived immaturity that was then given as a reason why the participants often couldn't engage with younger students, as they would not be able to understand or appreciate the difficulties of adult/a participant's life. In Eriksonian terms the participants perceived that the younger students had not completed many of the tasks that symbolise entry into adulthood, for example starting a career or family, and so had not yet crossed the bridge from the pre-adult world to the adult world (Levinson, 1978, cited in Golan, 1981; Santrock, 2006). Therefore the majority of participants perceived that they could not identify with these younger students.

Some participants took the description of younger students as children, or as acting childishly, and progressed that narrative in such a way as to produce a description of a parent-child dynamic between themselves and the younger-students. This narrative was produced by those participants who had children who were close to the age of the younger students, and was more commonly produced by the female participants. These students, of similar age to the participant's children, may have acted as an identity-cue for the participant's family-identity (Nipper-Eng, 1996).

The University itself was perceived, by many of the participants, as being organised in such a way as to facilitate the younger students' 'way of life' rather than that of the mature students. The participants perceived that there was an implicit, dominant discourse that privileged the younger students over the mature students. This fed into the widely held perception amongst the participants that mature students represent a minority within the university. Similar research findings have been produced in other research studies that have found different discourses being utilised in the same context, for example Musson and Duberley's (2007) study which found that there was a clash, at supervisor level in a particular organisation, between the utilisation of a management discourse and three other alternative discourses. At time two, in the current research study, when the majority of the participants had overcome earlier anxieties, the participants described themselves, or other mature students, as being more willing to speak up in class and as generally being more outspoken than the younger students, and more ready to stand up to and question lecturers, due to having more life experience. Again this is based on a perceived immaturity of younger students. This was somewhat balanced, however, by a perception of the younger students as being more attuned to the education system and consequently being more organised and better able to deal with academic activities such as university exams.

The younger mature students, those participants who fell into the twenty-three to thirty-five year old category or at least defined themselves in terms of a younger mature student-identity, constructed themselves as being stuck in-between these categories of younger student and mature student. These participants had ambivalent, schizo or conflicted identification in the university context, in that they identified and disidentified with both groups at different contextual levels (Kreiner and Ashforth,

2004). They described themselves as having characteristics in common with, but also differences from the stereotypical member of both categories. While they felt they were more mature, and had more life experience, than the younger students they had similar social lives and had good relations with some of the younger students. And while they identified themselves as mature students, they saw a difference between themselves and the older mature students, who tended to have established families, frequently discussed their children, and were more unfamiliar with the education system than the younger mature students. This is simlar to Kriener and Ashforth's (2004) concept of ambivilant identification, where an individual can simultaneously identify and disidentify with aspects of a particular context.

A minority of participants did not identity with other people within the university context on the basis of perceived similarity in terms of age/point on the lifespan. These participants identified with others based on perceived similarity in terms of factors such as being an outgoing, helpful person and/or showing an active interest in their university course; being focused on the fulfilment of a specific personal goal or mission; income bracket; social class; taste in music; political views; and trade union involvement. These were categorisations that these participants held very highly in terms of their own general-identity and world view, and hence they were brought into the new context-specific-identity for the university context and used as a basis for identifying with other context-members (Leonard et al, 1999; McLean et al, 2007).

A small number of participants sought to build a social network across a variety of groups, for example groups of mature students and groups of younger students, in order to build a social network containing context-members from different perceived categories. At time one these participants were resisting, through their

identity-work, the dominant discourse of mature students forming groups with other mature students. This is similar to the research findings of Musson and Duberley, 2007, where some supervisors in an organisational context were resisting prescribed management discourses of participation. At time two, in the current research study, there was an increase in the number of participants expressing this preference for having a variety of groups in one's social network, than had at time one of the research study. This can be seen as being due to the participants having to form relationships with other students in their prescribed groups, no matter what their categorisation, and thus, with the passage of time, identifying with them on the basis of this shared categorization. However, these identifications were described as being weaker than the participants' identification with their main, psychologically meaningful group (Haslam, 2002). Those participants who perceived that there were context-members in the university context with whom they identified, and with whom they co-created psychologically meaningful groups (Haslam, 2002), described these identifications, and the social networks that were created out of these, as being a source of social support that made their time in university easier.

Finally a small number of participants felt that there was no one in the university context with whom they could identify. These participants did not have a cohesive social network from which to garner support in difficult periods in their new context. This corresponds with Kriener and Ashforth's (2004) concept of neutral identification, where there is an explicit absence of both identification and disidentification within a context.

16.4.4.4. Participant Involvement in Groups Prescribed by the University Context

Participants differed in terms of how centrally involved they perceived themselves to be in prescribed groups such as their classes and tutorials (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wagner, 1991). These perceptions were complicated by the fact that, depending on the participant and the academic course they were undertaking, some or all the members of their organically co-created psychologically meaningful group(s) (Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003) were present within the prescribed groups. Therefore, when a participant was speaking about their level of involvement in a prescribed group there was some level of overlap between discussion of their organic and prescribed groups. These identification contours (Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003) were also complicated by the different "identificatory possibilities" (Hodges, 1998, pp. 273) that emerged from the participants descriptions of how one could be centrally involved in a prescribed group. Participants identified the paths to central involvement (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wagner, 1991) along two different lines. Firstly one could be central in terms of the academic nature of the class by participating in class discussions and engaging with the lecturers, and secondly one could be centrally involved in the class in terms of its social side by engaging in class based social events. Both of these allowed participants to increase their level of identification with, and the amount of influence they have within, that prescribed group (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Lave and Wegner, 1991). This kind of group socialisation, involving self-categorisation and self-stereotyping, influences the process of creating a context-specific-identity (Aronson et al, 2005; Macrae et al, 1996).

There was a trend among the participants that, between time one and time two of the research study, they reported becoming more involved in the groups prescribed

by the university context. All but two of the participants who described themselves as being centrally involved in prescribed groups at time one felt as involved, if not more involved, at time two. All but three of those who had perceived themselves as peripherally involved at time one felt more involved in prescribed at time two. Over half of the participants who described feeling neither centrally nor peripherally involved, or feeling that they were both in different instances, at time one, reported feeling more involved at time two. This trend represents a progression, made by the majority of the participants, towards normalisation and being a centrally involved insider in their prescribed groups (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Katz, 1980, cited in Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Lave and Wegner, 1991). Among those participants who described being centrally involved in certain circumstances, within groups prescribed by the university, but as being peripherally involved in others, described the size of the group as an important factor in how comfortable, and how centrally involved, they constructed themselves as being. The smaller groups were seen as facilitating central participation more than the larger, more anonymous lectures.

The small number of participants who described feeling less centrally involved at time two, than they had at time one, attributed this change to specific, negative events that impacted on their involvement in the university context (Denzin, 1989, cited in Ashforth, 2001; Leonard et al, 1999; Morrell, 2005; Morrell, Loan-Clarke and Wilkinson, 2004) such as conflict with other context-members or interference from other contexts in the participant's life.

16.4.5. Summary

In terms of how the current research study has provided answers to sub-question two of the research question (how is an individual's identity-structure

affected by their entry into a new context and the associated process of identity-creation?), the research results demonstrate that participants' identity-portfolios were affected by the overarching identity-creation narratives they used to manage the identity-creation process. These overarching narratives functioned to bridge the gap between who the participant had been in the past, who they were in the present and who they wished to be in the future. Depending on a participant's individual circumstances this identity-creation narrative could involve a significant reconstruction of their identity-portfolio as they changed their sense of themselves to incorporate their new context-specific-identity.

Numerous factors impacted on the development of these identity-creation narratives. These factors included whether or not the participant had exited a context in order to enter the university context, the degree of initial anxiety they experienced and how they dealt with that anxiety and what future goal(s) they were 'on the path' to achieving. Other factors that impacted on the development of the participants' identity-creation narrative included the university context's socialisation tactics, the participant's involvement in both organically co-created relationships, groups and social networks and in groups prescribed by the university and the basis by which the participants chose other context-members with whom they would socialise, especially in terms of those context members they perceived as being similar to themselves.

16.5. Identity-management in a Period of Identity-Creation
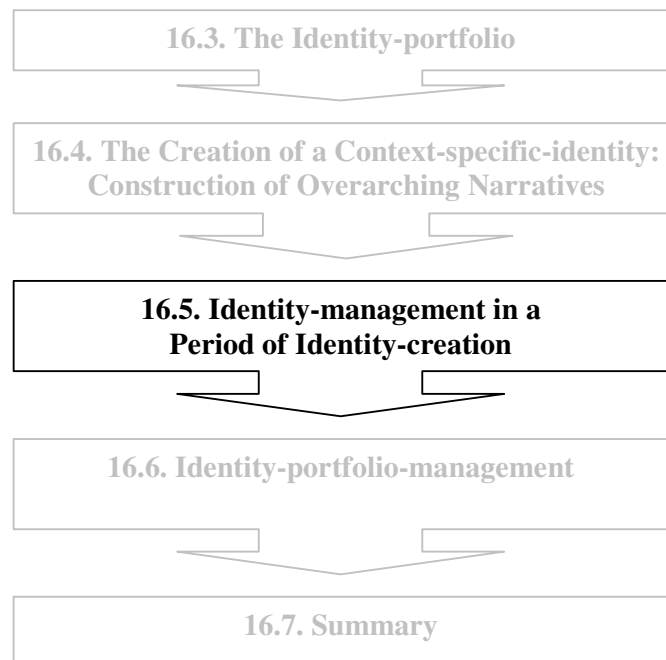
Figure 98. The structure of chapter sixteen: 16.5. Identity-management in a period of identity-creation

This subsection of the discussion will focus on the way in which a participant's identity-portfolio was necessarily maintained on a day-to-day basis throughout the identity-creation process, as it is necessarily maintained throughout that participant's lifespan (see figure 98). This was achieved through the use of certain proactive and reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies. Participants constructed themselves as being motivated to utilise these techniques in order to avoid, minimise or eliminate perceived dissonance, conflict or identity-struggle within or between the contexts perceived as existing in their lives. Identity-management was found, through an analysis of participant data, to be affected by certain external and internal factors that either facilitated or impeded the participant in carrying out this identity-work (see figure 99). The way in which a participant engaged in day-to-day identity-

management was influenced by the overarching narratives within which they carried out this identity-management. A participants overarching narratives constrained the way in which that participant interpreted, and dealt with, their day-to-day experiences. The degree to which a participant engaged in proactive identity-management, along with any external or internal facilitators and/or difficulties, resulted in that participant experiencing a particular degree of identity-struggle. Depending on the participants ability to eliminate or minimise this identity-struggle/dissonance three distinct outcomes were described. If participants were able to either avoid the occurrence of dissonance or deal effectively with any such occurrence they could remain in the university context and continue to utilise their new context-specific-identity without any difficulty. If the participant was experiencing ongoing identity-struggle, could not deal with it using reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies, but was committed to remaining in the university context then they continued to utilise their new context-specific-identity. However, this context-specific-identity was interwoven with the ongoing identity-struggle/dissonance that was occurring and therefore became a dysfunctional identity. If the participant was experiencing a degree of dissonance, which they could not minimise or eliminate using reactive/adaptive strategies, that they felt was incommensurate with any anticipated rewards of remaining in the university context then they chose to exit the context and discontinue their use of that context-specific-identity. This then eliminated the ongoing dissonance or identity-struggle and would aid in restoring the coherency of their identity-portfolio.
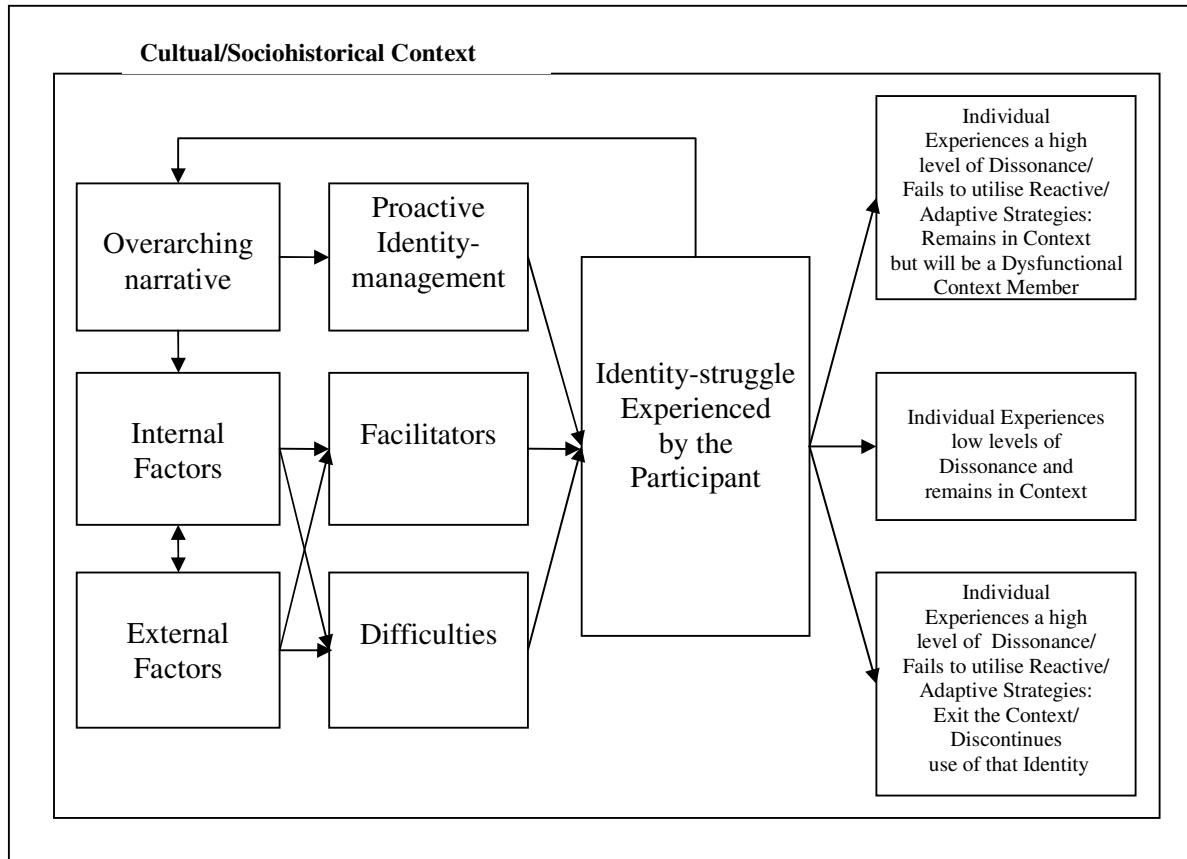
Figure 99. Identity-management during a period of identity-creation

16.5.1. The Influence of Overarching Narratives on Identity-management

The results from the current research study showed an interaction between the participants' management of the overarching narratives relating to how their new context-specific-identity was fitting into their pre-existing identity-portfolio, and the participants' day-to-day identity-management. A participant's engagement in identity-management processes was affected by the overarching narrative being used to interpret the new university context in that it provided the individual with a framework of understanding with which they viewed their new surroundings on a day-to-day basis. In turn a participant's overarching narrative was affected by day-to-day events, in that these events had to be worked in, or out, of that narrative (McLean et al 2007) in order to preserve the individual's sense of coherence and continuity, in terms of their identity-portfolio. This interaction has not been focused on or commonly found in previous research, but has also been found in Bell et al's (2005; 2007) research, which found an interaction between micro and ontogenetic levels of identity development in university students during their first two years in university.

16.5.2. Proactive Identity-management Strategies

Those participants who constructed themselves as proactively managing their regularly occurring identity-changes described a number of proactive identity-management strategies. These strategies were used to manage both the practical elements involved in making identity-changes and also in the overt management of the participant's various context-specific-identities. The research findings focusing on identity-changing compliments existing research that examines how people manage

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their regular identity-changes as they change between different contexts, for example Campbell-Clark's (2000) and Nippert-Eng's (1996) respective research studies on how people manage the identity-change between a work-identity and a home/family-identity.

The most commonly described strategy was that of planning ahead or organising one's life so that things would 'run smoothly' and dissonance would be avoided. Once this planning or organisation was in place the participant would be able to settle into a relatively automatic or 'mindless' process of identity-changing (Ashforth and Fried, 1988; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) that would make identity-changes relatively easily and effortlessly while conserving cognitive capacity. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) describe conscious or concentrated identity-work as being needed in complex or fragmented contexts or during crises or transitions. Perceived stability, on the part of the individual, means that they do not have to engage in this conscious or concentrated identity-work. A variation on this strategy was where participants constructed themselves as being organised but also allowing a degree of flexibility in their planning, in terms of meeting unanticipated challenges. Adams et al (1992) describe a healthy identity as being flexible, adaptive and open to changes in a particular context. Another strategy described by the participants was to organise one's life by prioritising what they saw as being the more important context in their life at a given time, indicating a potential link between proactive identity-management and the individual's identity-hierarchy (Ashforth, 2001; Stryker, 1980; 1986; Stryker and Serpe, 1982).

Other proactive identity-management strategies described by the participants are similar to the segmentation and integration strategies proposed by Nipper-Eng (1996) and those who utilise her work (for example Ashforth et al, 2000 and

Campbell-Clark, 2000). Some participants described a preference for proactively managing the parts of their lives by keeping certain/all the contexts in their life separate from each other (segmentation). This involves the segmentation of psychological and/or physical/temporal elements of these perceived contexts. These participants perceived that this gave them the chance to focus fully on a particular context, given that they had 'shut the door' on the other context(s). If this strategy is used for a long period of time to keep two contexts segmented from one another the associated context-specific-identities may then evolve independently over time and diverge in their content even more (Shamir, 1992, cited in Ashforth et al, 2000). A related point is that in terms of the participants' communication with others in the university, especially those in their psychologically meaningful groups (Haslam, 2002; Haslam et al, 2003), some participants preferred to segment the contexts in their life through restricting conversations held in the university context to topics related to the university context. Other participants constructed themselves as preferring to bring the perceived parts of their lives areas closer together and felt that they were the exact same person in all the areas of their life (integration) (Nippert-Eng, 1996). This integration was facilitated by the participant perceiving, or wishing to perceive, himself/herself as consistently utilising a singular, or at least similar, identity across the multiple contexts existing in their life (Nippert-Eng, 1996), and by the overlap of objects or individuals between these different contexts Previous research by Elsbach (2004), Kroger and Adair (2008), Nipper-Eng (1996) and Van Halen and Janssen, (2004) has found that objects or individuals can act as identity-primes or cues for specific identities. Therefore if two contexts share objects or individuals they will be brought closer together in terms of that individual's identity-portfolio. Identity-changes for these individuals will not require as much identity-work as those who

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segment, as there is no clear "line of demarcation" (Campbell-Clark, 2000, pp. 756) between the different 'ways of being'. However, there is an increased risk of conflict occurring due to the lack of a "mental fence" between contexts (Zerubavel, 1991, pp. 2). Again, a related point here is that some participants expressed a preference for integrating the university context with the other contexts in their life by engaging in conversations about their lives outside of the university, within the university context.

A final proactive management strategy described by the participants was that of managing one's relationships/interactions with other people. This strategy points to an understanding of the impact other people, especially significant others, trusted friends or family members, can have on an individual's ability to effectively manage their day-to-day identity-changing. Similar research results have been found by researchers such as Nippert-Eng (1996) and Campbell-Clark (2000) who describes those with can affect an individual's identity-management as border-keepers.

16.5.3. Facilitators of Identity-management

Participants described a number of factors, constructed as coming from internal and external sources, which facilitated their effective engagement in identity-management.

16.5.3.1. Internal Facilitators

The internal facilitator described by the participants was that of having a flexible mindset with which to approach day-to-day identity management, which these participants perceived as giving them more control over their lives, as they were not restricted in how they responded to situations. These participants retained the

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flexibility to change their own expectations, attitudes and behaviours if it was found to be necessary. Again this corresponds with Adams et al (1992) description of a healthy identity as being flexible, adaptive and open to changes in a particular context.

16.5.3.2. External Facilitators

There were several facilitators of identity-management that were constructed, by the participants, as originating externally to the individual. The most commonly identified of these was the support the participants received from their family, friends or significant others (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Drigotas et al, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Richter, 1990). Money/financial security/lack of financial insecurity was described as facilitating the participants' regular identity-changing. The "meaning of money" (Furnham, 1998, pp. 38) for the participants was that if one does not have enough one would have to expend energy and time worrying about ones finances. Finally, participants' described physical/temporal factors as being facilitators of identity-management. This was described in terms of the physical/temporal elements facilitating an individual's identity-changes due to everything in the participant's life being physically close together, but also in terms of there being a large physical distance between two contexts as this allowed time and 'psychological space' for identity-change or even an enjoyable activity, for example reading on the bus, during the journey/commute between the contexts (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Richter, 1990). The commute becomes part of a transition ritual or rite of passage, as described by Richter (1990), which facilitates the participant's identity-change.

16.5.4. Difficulties Experienced in Identity-management

The participants also identified several factors within their lives that hampered them in their attempts to effectively engage in identity-management processes. Several of these factors represented the 'other side of the coin' of factors that were also described as facilitators of identity-management. Again these factors can be divided up into those that were constructed as originating within the individual and those that were constructed as originating externally to the individual.

16.5.4.1. Internal Difficulties

Some of the difficulties in day-to-day identity-management were constructed, by the participants, as originating internally in that they couldn't successfully manage their own self-perceptions in their regular identity-changes and/or within those specific-contexts, resulting in the occurrence of dissonance (Festiger, 1957) or identity-struggle (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Participants experienced conflict between their current held self-perceptions and their perception of who they should be or wanted to be, in terms of their possible future-identity-structures (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Markus and Wurf, 1987; Weinreich, 2003). Participants also experienced dissonance or identity-struggle in terms of not being able to successfully manage the identity-changes necessary as they engaged with the different contexts in their life. Identities appropriate to one context were cued by internal or external factors (Forehand et al, 2002; Nipper-Eng, 1996) and utilised in a context where that identity was not appropriate, or at least not useful. Participants described not being able to break out of one 'way of being', in order to engage with another. This was especially likely to happen where participants described being sensitive to external and/or internal cues, which resulted in constant, rapid identity-changing and a lack of

concentration in the context at hand. One of the external difficulties that will be discussed below, a perceived lack of control over some or all the contexts in one's life, also had an internal element. This emerged though participant descriptions of having lost control over their lives as they were moving away from the previous structure and routine that had existed in their life before they engaged in the identity-creation process, and how they had not gained any such sense of stability in the way their life was now structured. This may represent what Marcia (2002) refers to as a regression from identity-achievement to identity diffusion, as the individual permits the existing identity-structure to "fall apart so that a new structure can emerge" (Marcia, 2002b, pp. 15).

16.5.4.2. External Difficulties

Other difficulties identified by participants, in terms of their attempts to effectively engage in identity-management, were constructed as originating externally to the participants. Time was constructed as the participants' most significant external difficulty in terms of identity-management, as many participants felt they were constantly battling with, or for, time. This was caused by the participants having contexts in their lives that were time-consuming. This would be expected for individuals within the age-range of these participants, as adults frequently have to manage a complex identity-portfolio, involving multiple, time-consuming and salient context, for example family and work contexts (Whitbourne, 1986b). Lack of time was constructed as a reason why participants had to prioritise particular contexts over others. Lack of time was also constructed as being the reason for a perceived lack of energy causing unaccomplished goals in some or all the contexts in the participant's

life and for too little time being spent in self-reflection/generally having no time for 'oneself'.

A difficulty closely aligned with time was physical distance, usually discussed in terms of a difficult commute between regularly utilised contexts that made an associated identity-change more difficult or arduous (Richter, 1990). Those participants who used public transport as their primary mode of transportation described an added difficulty in their commute in that they had no control over the timing or efficiency of the services they used (Nippert-Eng, 1996). This leads to the next difficulty described by the participants, which was a perceived lack of control over some or all the contexts in their lives, often due to existing sociocultural or sociophysical structures over which the individual did not have control (Richter, 1990). This perceived lack of control resulted in these participants feeling that they were unable to proactively plan or organise their life, due to the influence of external forces such as work organisations or academic institutions.

The impact that others can have on day-to-day identity-management (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Drigotas et al, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Richter, 1990) was highlighted again in discussions of identity-management difficulties. Participants described the negative impact that other individuals had on their daily affairs. Individuals who caused these difficulties were family members, especially children, the fathers of the participant's child/children, where the participant was a single mother, and participant's friends.

A difficulty that affected the participants' ability to effectively engage in identity-management, and which could potentially encompass many of the difficulties discussed so far was where the participants described a clash or conflict between two contexts within their life that were both perceived to be highly important/salient

(Ashforth, 2001; Stryker, 1980; 1986; Stryker and Serpe, 1982) and/or time-consuming. This represented a challenge to the participant, who had to juggle both the practical elements of maintaining both contexts and the difficult identity-work involved in attempting to focus on one context without being distracted by the other. This often led to dissonance or identity-struggle in the individual. The university context, as the new, highly salient, time-consuming part of the participants' lives was described as clashing with family life, particularly with the participants' roles as parents (where applicable), participants' hobbies, paid employment, social lives, friendships and intimate relationships. This research finding is a common one within the work-family literature, for example Campbell-Clark (2000) where individuals often find it difficult to manage those two time-consuming contexts.

Money was constructed as a difficulty in many of the participant's lives (Argyle and Furnham, 1998). This is another difficulty that is intertwined with many of the other identity-management difficulties already mentioned. Money, or more precisely a lack of money, was constructed as being linked to a lack of control, where participants described not being able to do things they wanted due to financial insecurity or financial restrictions. Money was linked to participants having a lack of time, as they described having to spend time working purely to make money to facilitate the upkeep of the other contexts in their lives. A lack of money was constructed as being a valid reason for a participant to be dissatisfied with their life, or aspects of their life, and was also constructed as being a 'necessary evil'. Those participants who had been engaged in full-time employment but left to enter the university context and become a mature student, a role that is not financially rewarded, experienced their loss of income as quite an acute source of conflict/anxiety.

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16.5.5. Reactive/Adaptive Identity-management Strategies

Participants described themselves as employing a number of reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies in order to eliminate or minimise the effects of the difficulties incurred during the participants' engagement in identity-management processes (Leonard et al, 1999; Markus and Kundra, 1986; Richter, 1990).

A reactive/adaptive identity-management strategy described by participants, which was used to eliminate or minimise experienced dissonance or identity-struggle, was to be flexible in one's reaction to the dissonance-invoking experience (Leonard et al, 1999), to 'roll with the punches' and adapt one's own expectations and attitudes through a process of reorientation (Richter, 1990).

Another strategy described by the participants was to take a step back from the dissonance-invoking experience, review the situation and put in place a plan to eliminate or minimise the dissonance. Leonard et al (1999) describe this as a 'motivation' adaptive strategy. A link may be seen here between reactive and proactive identity-management strategies as, when a participant develops a plan to deal with current dissonance or identity-struggle, this may come to represent a plan that could be used proactively in the participant's future.

Another reactive/adaptive identity-management strategy involved participants choosing what they perceived to be their top priority at the time they are experiencing the dissonance/conflict, and to proceed in that manner, dealing with the sources of conflict/the perceived demands on them according to their perception of each problematic issue's importance. This indicates a possible link between the use of reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies and an individual's identity-hierarchy (Ashforth, 2001; Stryker, 1980; 1986; Stryker and Serpe, 1982).

Other reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies identified by the participants included avoiding the situations causing the perceived difficulties (Leonard et al [1999] describe this as 'feedback avoidance'), being confrontational with the people involved (Leonard et al [1999] describe this as 'changing feedback') and attempting to solve the difficulty through communication by negotiating or compromising agreement with others involved in the experienced difficulties (Campbell-Clark, 2000; Drigotas et al, 1999; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Richter, 1990).

A reactive/adaptive identity-management strategy, identified by the participants, resembles the segmentation element of Nipper-Eng's (1999) integration-segmentation continuum. Participants described employing a reactive/adaptive identity-management strategy involving an integration of the contexts perceived as existing in their life in order to makes their life more manageable overall.

The final two reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies described by the participants attempt to respond to the difficulties being experienced, not by attempting to eliminate or minimise the effects of the difficulties in any direct way, but by providing a meaningful explanation (McLean et al, 2007) for that lack of direct intervention. Participants described dealing with perceived conflict by deciding to struggle through their difficulties, until the goals they perceived as being connected to the origin of those difficulties could be accomplished, for example completing a university course/gaining a third level qualification, or gaining entry to a desired career or profession. The negative effects of the dissonance or identity-struggle were weighed against the expected rewards of successfully fulfilling certain desired future-identity-structures. This adaptive strategy was facilitated by the temporal structure of the university/academic year, in that the participants could look forward to the summer break, which was anticipated to provide respite from the perceived

dissonance. This can be related to the 'reducing personal responsibility' adaptive strategy proposed by Leonard, et al (1999) in that these participants did not see themselves as having an active role in dealing with the perceived difficulties, they simply wished to 'wait out the storm'. A related strategy, described by a small number of participants was to simply claim that they did not have any solution for the difficulties they perceived as existing in their life. This can be seen as another means of reducing personal responsibility for eliminating the experienced dissonance (Leonard et al, 1999).

16.5.6. Summary

The research results discussed above demonstrate how the participants engaged in day-to-day identity-management, during a period of identity-creation, through a combination of proactive and reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies. Proactive identity-management strategies were intended to maintain the consistency and coherency of the participant's identity-portfolio through avoiding potential dissonance/identity-struggle. These strategies are aided by those factors in a participant's life that facilitated their engagement in effective identity-management. However, due to a number of factors/sources of difficulty, dissonance or identity-struggle is a common occurrence in participants' lives. Therefore it becomes necessary to employ a reactive/adaptive identity-management strategy if the participant is to be able to eliminate or minimise the perceived dissonance/identity-struggle.

In terms of how the current research study has provided answers to sub-question three of the research question (How does an individual manage their identity-structure on a day-to-day basis during a period of identity-creation?), which is the

final sub-question of the research question, the research results, supported by the existing literature, illustrate that the participants' constructed themselves as managing their identity-portfolios on a day-to-day basis through the use of a number of different proactive and reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies. This day-to-day identity-management was also described, by the participants, as being influenced by certain internal and/or external factors. This chapter has now responded to all three of the research question sub-questions as stated in chapter nine. The responses given to the three sub-questions combine to provide an answer to the general research question (What identity-creation and identity-management processes are involved in an individual's entry into a new organisational context?) as reflected in the discussion above. In summary, as an individual enters an organisation they engage in identity-creation processes involving the production and development of narratives that manage their overall sense of themselves, as well as engaging in day-to-day identity-management processes involving the utilisation of various proactive and/or reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies, which are facilitated or impeded by a range of internal and external factors. In the next subsection of the discussion the different elements of the research results discussed thus far are combined in order to produce a new construct, the identity-portfolio-management model.

16.6. Identity-portfolio-management
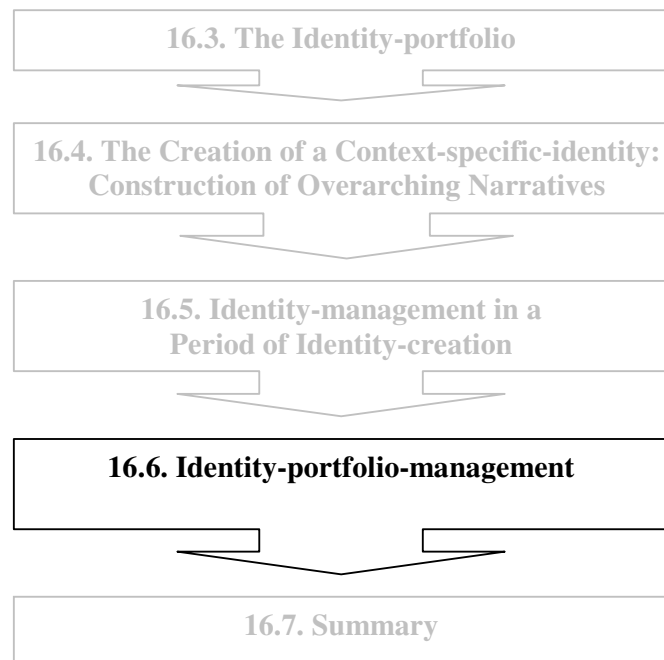
Figure 100. The structure of chapter sixteen: 16.6. Identity-portfolio-management

This subsection of the discussion (see figure 100) highlights the symbiotic relationship between the different levels of identity-portfolio-management that can be utilised in avoiding dissonance or identity-struggle and maintaining, or even enhancing, the coherence and continuity of one's identity-portfolio. Figure 101 presents the identity-portfolio-management model, which is a new construct created from an amalgamation of the various research findings presented above. This model provides a cohesive view of the processes involved in an individual's management of their identity-portfolio, specifically during a period of identity-creation.

The identity-portfolio-management model describes how the degree of perceived dissonance or identity-struggle impacting upon the coherence and continuity of an individual's identity-portfolio is a product of their ability to manage

their identity-portfolio. This identity-portfolio-management must be carried out at a macro level, involving the production and maintenance of overarching narratives, and at a micro level, involving day-to-day identity-management through the use of proactive and reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies.

Depending on the individual's ability to effectively manage their identity-portfolio different outcomes will result. The individual may achieve a state of relatively easy or effortless identity-portfolio-management, where the individual may utilise rites, rituals or routines to manage their identity within a particular context and to conduct identity-changes while in a relative state of mindlessness or 'automatic pilot'. The individual may experience him/herself as being engaged in difficult or effortful identity-portfolio-management, due to internal and/or external difficulties, but then choose to retain the existing structure of their identity-portfolio. An example of this would be where an individual has produced a narrative of dysfunction, which necessarily involves ongoing dissonance due to the individual not being able to employ effective proactive or reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies. However, the individual remains in the context due to their commitment to the context itself, other context-members (particularly significant others) or to anticipated goals, connected with the individual's desired future-identity-structures, which the
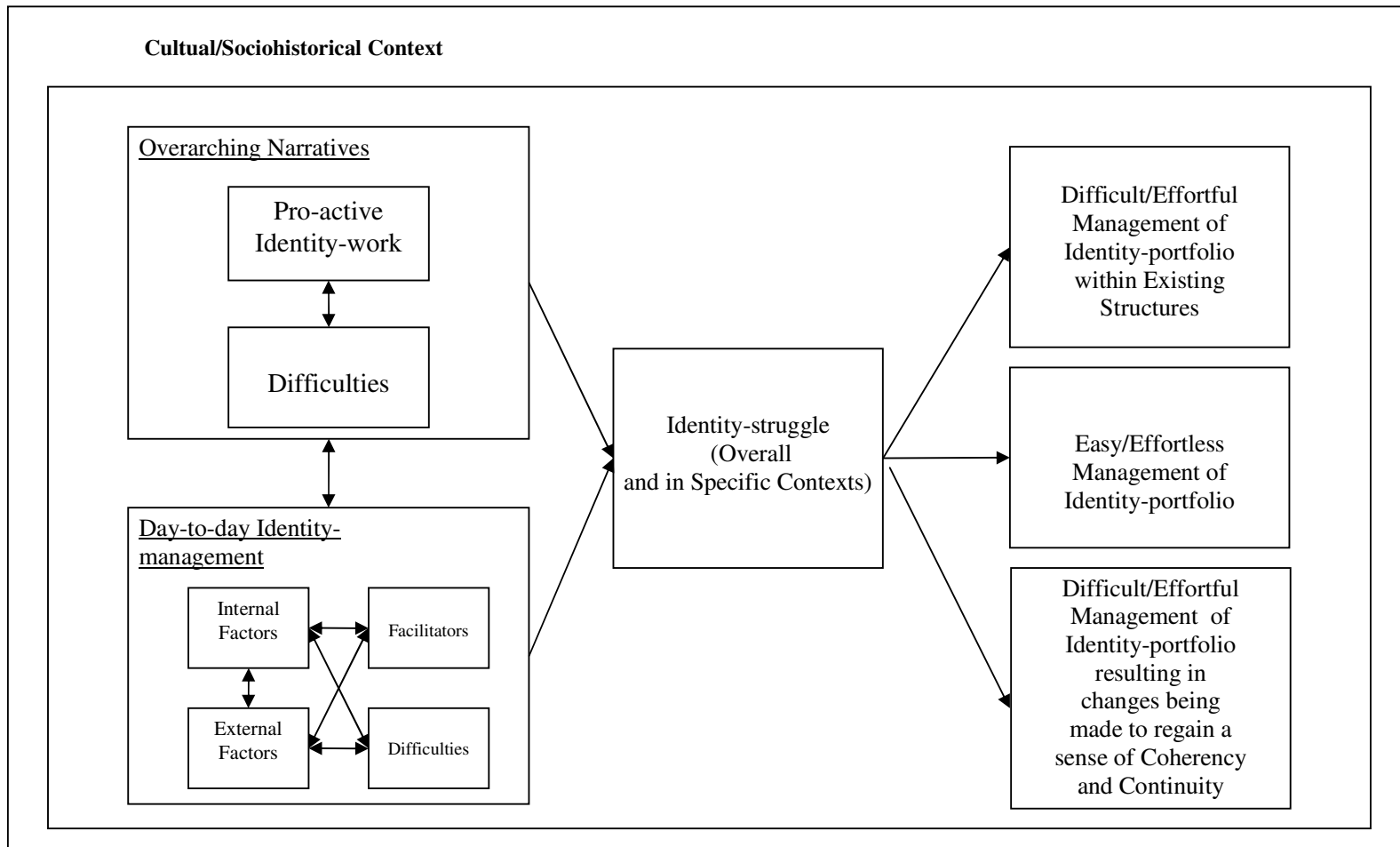
Figure 101. Identity-portfolio-management during a period of identity-creation

individual perceives will be achieved if they remain in the context. Where the individual does not feel sufficiently committed to the existing structure of their identity-portfolio, or feels that they cannot tolerate the current level of perceived dissonance they are experiencing they may, as a consequence, make changes to the identity-portfolio in order to regain a sense of coherence and continuity. The individual may attempt to change others' expectations through a redefinition of certain role demands, change their own expectations and attitudes through a process of reorientation or exit a context and discontinue the use of the associated context-specific-identity in order to eliminate the perceived dissonance. An example of this, from the current research study, was P5 who was leaving the university context due to experiencing dissonance caused by stress within the university context and a perceived clash between her identity as a mature student and her identity as a homemaker/parent, as well as with her goal of enjoying the experience of being in university.

The identity-portfolio-management model (see figure 101) emerged from research findings that described the processes engaged in by the participants, in the current research study, while they managed their identity-portfolio during a period of identity-creation. The model may also be relevant in examining individuals who are not engaged in identity-creation but who are engaged in identity-portfolio-management in what would be perceived as more stable periods of the lifespan. This is primarily due to the fact that these two situations are not fundamentally different, merely that the potential degree of identity-work is greater, and perhaps the types of identity-work are different, during a period of identity-creation than during a period of perceived stability in an individual's life. An individual is constantly engaged in

processes of creating, recreating and managing their identity-portfolio, across the lifespan, regardless of their perception of the degree of stability or instability in their life, or sense of themselves, at any given time. It is towards that perception of stability, coherence and continuity that the individual strives in their identity-work. However, the individual's perceived stability in terms of 'who they are' should not be reified as essential and 'real', beyond the 'realness' that it holds for the individual in terms of their constructed social reality.

The identity-portfolio-management model assumes, based on research findings that emerged from an in-depth analysis of participant data and supported by sources in the existing literature, that an individual's identity-portfolio is structured in the way shown in the "identity-portfolio" subsection of the discussion above. That is to say an individual's identity-portfolio is a multidimensional, hierarchical structure made up of a general-identity and, typically, a number of context-specific-identities. The identity-portfolio-management model must also be viewed within an appropriate developmental, cultural and sociohistorical context, in order to avoid the reification of identity-related concepts.

16.6.1. Summary

The identity-portfolio-management model is a new construct that describes the processes by which an individual effectively or ineffectively manages their identity-portfolio, resulting in associated outcomes. This model was produced through the combination of the various research findings, which emerged from the data-led, in-depth analysis of participant data. The model provides a cohesive view of the symbiotic interrelationship between the management of overarching identity-

narratives and day-to-day identity-management. It provides a cohesive view of how the degree of dissonance produced during this process results in identity-portfolio-related outcomes ranging from easy and effortless identity-portfolio-management to dissonance or identity-struggle that is intense enough to motivate the individual to radically change their identity-structure, in order to retain a sense of coherence and consistency with regard to their identity-portfolio.

16.7. Summary

The current chapter has added a theoretical dimension to the results presented in chapters ten to fourteen. This chapter has discussed matters relating to identity-structure and the identity-portfolio, which is seen as being made up of a general-identity and, typically, several context-specific-identities. Processes involved in context-specific-identity-creation have been discussed, specifically the construction and use of overarching narratives to maintain the coherence and continuity of an individual's identity-portfolio, during a period of identity-creation as in the current research study. There has also been a discussion of the processes related to issues of day-to-day identity-management during a period of identity-creation, what facilitates and impedes these processes and what strategies an individual may use in avoiding, minimising or eliminating perceived dissonance or identity-struggle in their life. Finally, the current chapter has brought together several different elements of the research results to present a model of identity-portfolio-management. This model highlights the symbiotic relationship between the macro and micro aspects of identity-portfolio-management, between the construction and maintenance of overarching

narratives and day-to-day identity-management, along with different potential

outcomes for individuals engaged in the identity-portfolio-management process.

17. Conclusion

17.1. The Position of Chapter Seventeen within Section C

15. Introduction to Section C

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16. Discussion

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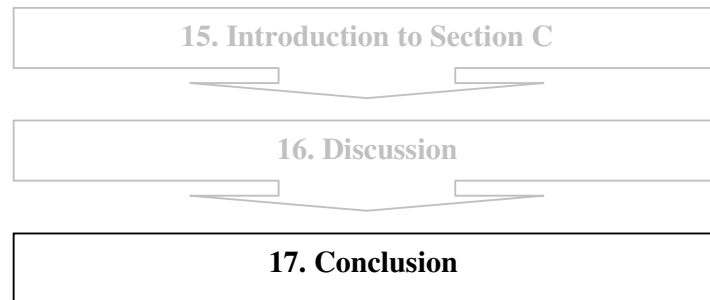
17. Conclusion

Figure 102. The structure of section C: Chapter seventeen. Conclusion

Chapter seventeen, the conclusion, is the final chapter of Section C (see figure 102). This chapter provides concluding comments for the thesis.

17.2. The Structure of Chapter Seventeen

17.3. Thesis Summary

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17.4. Contributions of the Current Research Study to the Existing Literature

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17.5. Future Research

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17.6. Limitations of the Study
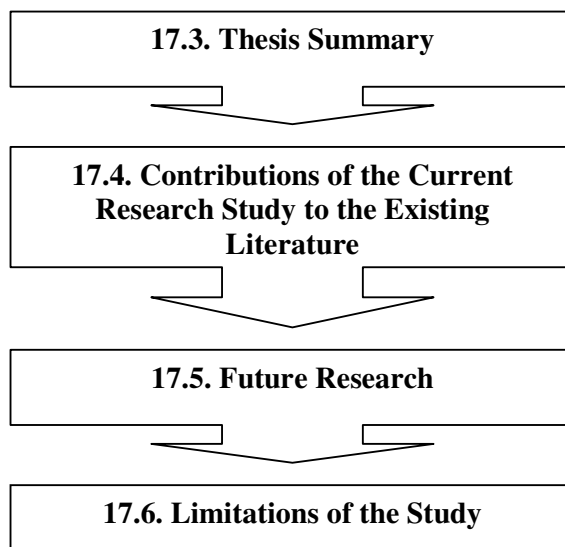
Figure 103. The structure of chapter seventeen

Chapter seventeen provides a number of concluding comments regarding this thesis (see figure 103). This chapter presents a summary of the thesis, discusses the contributions of the current research study to the existing literature, possibilities for future research that arise out of the current research study and the limitations of the current research study.

17.3. Thesis Summary
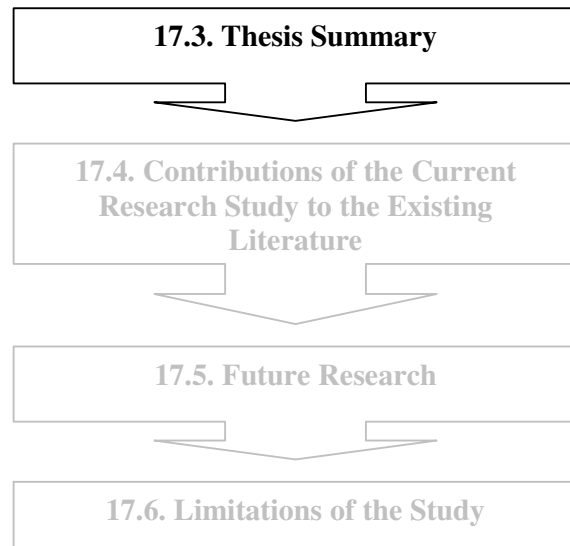
Figure 104. The structure of chapter seventeen: 17.3. Thesis summary

This subsection of the conclusion provides a summary of the thesis (see figure 104). The current research study has examined issues relating to identity-structure and to processes of identity-creation and identity-management, in order to ascertain what identity-creation and identity-management processes are involved in an individual's entry into a new organisational context. This examination was achieved through the utilisation of a multi-method design, with a small quantitative component supporting the dominant, qualitative component of the research study. The data collected from

the participants, thirty-four first year mature students in two Irish Universities, was principally analysed utilising a discursive psychology analytic approach.

The principle findings of the current research study were that the participants managed their identity-portfolios through two different but interrelated processes. The participants managed their identity-portfolios through both a management of overarching narratives that was particularly useful in managing the once-off changes involved in the identity-creation process and through their day-to-day, or at least regular identity-management. The degree of success, or failure, with which a participant managed these interrelated processes, influenced by external and internal factors, determined the form taken by their new context-specific-identity, and ultimately their identity-portfolio overall.

Within the literature review (Chapter two to seven) the first task undertaken was to place the study of identity in an appropriate cultural and sociohistorical context, and to acknowledge the current research study's location within Western culture and in the current sociohistorical period. A review of the existing research and literature relating to individual identity-structure was presented, which was necessarily embedded in a developmental context. This was necessary in order to highlight that the development and maintenance of a multidimensional identity-structure (the identity-portfolio) occurs across the lifespan. From here the literature review focused on the processes involved in the creation of a context-specific-identity as an individual enters, and is socialised into, a new context, and then on the different elements involved in day-to-day identity-management.

The current research study aimed to produce a rich, in-depth account of the identity-creation and identity-management processes involved in an individual's entry into a new context. Therefore, a methodological framework was created that

principally utilised an in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interview method. Thirty-four first year mature students from two Irish Universities were chosen for the research study. In order for data collection to be as efficient as possible an initial quantitative survey booklet was used to collect basic information about the participants' perceptions of their lives. The information from these LDSBs then provided a basis for two semi-structured interviews, one conducted at the beginning of the participants' academic year and the second seven months later. The data collected was then principally analysed using a discursive psychology analytic method in order that the participants' constructions of their identity-structures and their engagement in identity-processes could be effectively located, explored and presented.

The analysis of participant data, principally using a discursive psychology analytic method, led to the production of the research results. These results were related to the participants' constructions of how they perceived their lives as being structured and the structure of their identity-portfolio. Participants' identity-creation narratives, regarding how and why they had become mature students, also emerged from the research results. Other research results related to how the participants constructed themselves in terms of their engagement in day-to-day identity-management, and also how the participants' engagement in identity-creation and identity-management processes in the new university context were affected by how they formed groups and relationships with other context-members within the university context.

In the discussion a theoretical dimension was added to the research findings in order to elaborate on the research results and assess the correspondence between the research findings and the pre-existing literature and research. The participant's self-constructions corresponded with an existing view, within the literature, of identity-

structure as a hierarchal, multidimensional identity-structure (the identity-portfolio). The identity-portfolio is conceptualised here, in response to the data, as being made up of a general-identity (which may be conceived of as a non-context-specific-identity that can be a 'way of being' in and of itself, or it may be intertwined with a context-specific-identity) and, typically, a number of context-specific-identities, created for use within corresponding contexts in the participants life. The participants were motivated to maintain their identity-portfolio, in order that they could maintain a sense of coherence and continuity between their reconstructed past, their current self-perception and the possible, future-identity-structures they aspired to and/or wished to avoid. Again these results correspond with existing sources in the literature.

Results, which emerged from an analysis of participant data, demonstrated how the utilisation of particular narratives explains how an individual can reach certain decisions relating to context-specific-identity-creation. These narratives were typically begun in the past, before the individual described the present, while also having a focus on the future, where the goals that were influencing the participant's decisions in the present would, at least potentially, be realised. The discontinued use of formerly valued context-specific-identities, the initial anxiety commonly involved in the identity-creation process and critical events or turning points experienced while creating and maintaining the new context-specific-identity were all necessarily incorporated into a participant's narrative in order to maintain the consistency and coherency of the participant's identity-portfolio. The identity-creation process was influenced by other context-members. Organically created, psychologically meaningful groups were co-created within the new context, typically with those context-members who the participant perceived as being similar to him/her, and set against those with whom the participant disidentified. However, this organic group

creation occurred in an environment regulated by the context in which it was created, and hence the participants were also influenced in their socialising/group formation by participation in formal, organisational socialisation and their necessary membership of groups prescribed by the university context. The identification contours within the prescribed groups were shown to be complex, in that some, none or all of the members of the participant's organically co-created group(s) were present in the prescribed group, while they may also identify, in a weaker sense, with the context-members in the mechanical group purely on the basis of that shared identification. The discussion of the above results necessarily involved highlighting the links between them and relevant sources in the existing literature.

The discussion linked sources in the existing literature to the research results that highlighted the different factors affecting an individual's day-to-day identity-management as they make identity-changes within and between the contexts that exist in their life. Such identity-management could be proactively planned for, facilitated by internal and/or external factors and impeded by internal and/or external difficulties. When internal and/or external difficulties caused participants to perceive that dissonance or conflict was occurring, and was affecting their sense of personal coherence and continuity, reactive or adaptive identity-management strategies could be utilised in order to reduce or eliminate that dissonance. While the specific strategies may differ, these results were in general accordance with existing literature that describes the use of such strategies.

Finally, in the discussion, a model was presented that highlighted the way in which the participants' construction of overarching narratives, which they used to 'tell the story of their lives' to both themselves and others, and their engagement in day-to-day identity-management are interrelated and symbiotic. Both of these levels of

identity-management impact on the degree of perceived dissonance impacting on the coherence and continuity of the individual's identity-portfolio. This model builds on the individual results that emerged from participant data and are informed by sources in the existing literature to produce a new construct. Depending on the individual and their circumstances, engagement in these processes may result in the individual being able to manage their identity-portfolio easily. It may result in the individual experiencing difficult or effortful identity-portfolio-management, but with the individual remaining within the existing structure of their identity-portfolio due to perceived commitments. Or the individual's engagement in these processes may result in the individual perceiving that the level of perceived difficulty involved in identity-portfolio-management is such that they change the structure of their identity-portfolio in order to try and regain a sense of coherence and continuity for their 'life story'. One way that this may be achieved is by exiting the context in which the dissonance is perceived as originating, and discontinuing the use of the associated context-specific-identity.

In this model it is assumed, based on the research results as informed by existing literature, that an individual's identity-structure is made up of a hierarchal, multidimensional identity-portfolio consisting of a general-identity, a non-context-specific-identity, and a number of context-specific-identities, created for use within corresponding contexts in the individual's life. This identity-structure is also assumed to exist within a cultural, sociohistorical and developmental context, which facilitates the avoidance of the reification of certain identity-related concepts, which exist within such contexts, as essential or universal. Another factor that facilitates the avoidance of concepts, used in the model, being reified as essential, 'real' and stable is the

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avoidance of the utilisation of metaphors of physicality and movement in the discussion of identity-related processes, within the model.

17.4. Contributions of the Current Research Study to the Existing Literature
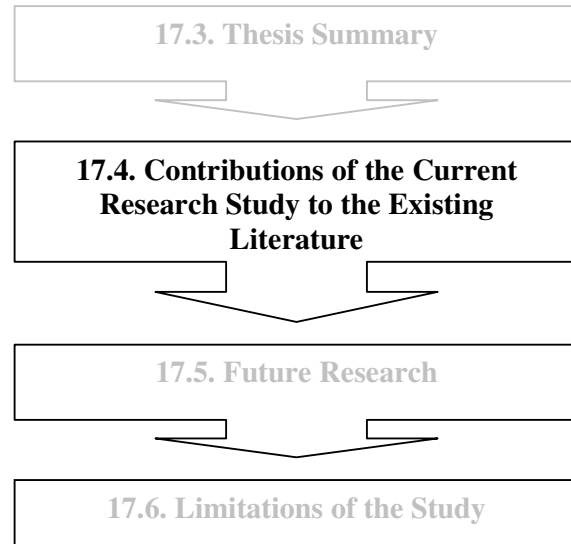
Figure 105. The structure of chapter seventeen: 17.4. Contributions of the current research study to the existing literature

The current research study contributes to the existing literature in several ways (see figure 105). Just as the metatheoretical positioning of the current research study was grounded in several different areas of the existing literature, so the research findings feedback to these areas and add to the advancement of several fields of research. The current research study provides a rich, in-depth reading of how individuals, such as the participants in the current research study, construct themselves with regard to their identity-structures, and of how they engage in processes of identity-creation and identity-management. This has a potential

contribution to make to any area of the literature that has a focus, directly or indirectly, on these identity-related issues. Specific areas to which the current research study's research finding may contribute are presented below. However, before these are presented the most significant contribution of the current research study, the identity-portfolio-management model, will be discussed.

17.4.1. The Identity-portfolio-management Model

As a product of a research study whose design was dominated by an in-depth qualitative analysis of individual constructions the identity-portfolio-management model can be seen as having emerged from, and therefore as being reflective of, the research participants and their constructions. This is in contrast to a study where such a model is presented a priori, and is then investigated to ascertain which elements of the model may be supported by the data. The theoretical contribution of this model to the existing literature lies in the fact that it represents a new construct that has emerged from an amalgamation of various research results, from the current research study, which were informed by existing literature and research. This model builds on the research results, highlighting relationships between the different processes discussed and the different outcomes uncovered and presented, in order to produce something new. The model provides a means by which theorists examining issues related to how individuals manage their sense of themselves, both in general/overall and in specific contexts/with regard to specific self-perceptions, can approach those issues and begin to make sense of them.

17.4.2. Identity Studies/Social Psychology

The research results from the current research study will contribute to those fields of research that specifically study concepts such as identity, self or self-concept. Those research findings relating to identity-structure (the identity-portfolio) will contribute to fields of study that focus on how an individual's self or identity or identity-structure can or should be conceptualised. This will be useful for researchers who study the topic of identity, or similar concepts, directly and those who do so indirectly, for example researchers who study how to cue or prime a specific identity for a particular purpose, for example in advertising.

Those research findings related to processes of identity-creation will benefit fields of research that focus on how people manage their sense of themselves when entering, or perhaps even creating, a new context, for example starting a career, moving jobs, retiring, becoming a parent, getting married, having children, taking up a hobby, being displaced by war or natural disaster or dealing with the death of a loved one. These results will be useful to any theorist who is examining an individual/individuals whose life/lives are changing due to some external or internal event, and who consequently have to reassess 'who they are' in their new set of circumstances.

Those fields of study that focus on the way in which an individual manages their sense of themselves on a regular, day-to-day basis will be able to draw on those research findings relating to processes of identity-management. These results would be of use to any theorist with a specific focus on identity-related concepts regarding regular identity-changes, for example an individual's identity-management during a daily/regular commute, with regard to a regular change between, for example, a work-

identity and a home/family-identity, or how individuals manage themselves within particular contexts.

17.4.3. Organisational Psychology/Management Studies

A number of the research findings in the current research study have relevance for fields of research in areas such as organisational psychology and management studies. Topics where the current research findings are of particular relevance are those of organisational socialisation, organisational socialisation tactics, organisational identification, organisational commitment or more generally any field of research which examines how an organisational context or powerful context-member, for example a manager, can influence an entrants engagement in processes of identity-creation. This can be in terms of the organisation or manager directly influencing the identity-creation process, for example through a structured socialisation process that prescribes a particular identity for internalisation, or in terms of the organisation or manager indirectly influencing the identity-creation process by providing workshops on time-management, self-management or dealing with anxiety in order to encourage the creation of a functional, positive context-specific-identity. These results may be applied to areas in the literature such as those related to mentoring, a specific relationship that may influence identity-creation, or person-organisation fit, where the entrant creates, or does not create, an identity that is congruent with the values and goals of the organisational context. The research findings would also be useful with regard to those who study the identification contours within an organisation, for example those who look at organic group

creation, or how individuals operate within prescribed groups, perhaps in terms of team building.

17.4.4. Work-Family/Work-Life Theory

The current research study did not restrict the number of, or type of, contexts a participant could discuss during data collection, except that the university context was necessarily discussed, as it was the participant's entry into that context that was of primary interest to the study. However, it became clear in the analysis of participant data that contexts such as home/family and work (or university, where university took a role in the participants life similar to work) were extremely important to the participants. The research findings could therefore contribute to fields of study that focus on the interplay between the work and family contexts. Concepts from the current research findings, especially from the identity-portfolio-management model, are useful in terms of providing a perspective on concepts from the literature such as work-family or work-life balance and work-family or work-life conflict. In general terms the research results will advance those fields of research that examine issues related to how an individual manages the change or move they make between particular contexts, for example work and family contexts, they perceive as existing in their life.

17.4.5. Avoiding the Reification of Identity-related Concepts by not using Metaphors of Physicality and Movement and placing them in an Appropriate Context

Another contribution made by the current research study is that it does not utilise metaphors of physicality and movement, and thereby did not reify concepts related to identity-structure and processes of identity-creation and identity-management as essential, objective entities. This illustrates at least one way, for other researchers/fields of research, in which these issues may be studied without utilising, or with a minimal use of, metaphors of physicality and movement. The current research study has also been placed in an appropriate socio-historical, cultural and developmental context. This will also contribute to a focus, in the literature, on identity-related issues as issues that must necessarily be placed in an appropriate context when being studied, and not construed as essential, objective entities that are unchanging across socio-historical periods or between cultures.

17.4.6. Implications for Educators/Educational institutions dealing with Mature Students

Specifically in terms of the context of the current research study, a contribution is made that allows educators and researchers who have a focus on the socialisation and identity-creation process of mature-students in Irish Third Level Education to further their understanding of the processes involved in this area. There are a number of recommendations that can be made for those individuals and

institutions that deal with mature students and organise their socialisation into an educational setting, based on the research findings.

In order for the goals of the institution and the mature students to be successfully attained, there must be a recognition, on behalf of the institution, that mature students, while in the process of creating a context-specific-identity for the university context, will typically be managing multiple other contexts that exist in their lives. This recognition should include practical steps such as the implementation of procedures that facilitate the individual's identity-creation process, the easy management of their identity-portfolio and encourage their new context-specific-identity to be one based on a strong identification with and commitment to the context. Those dealing with mature students should recognise that the mature students will create an overarching narrative of their involvement in the university context, while also utilising certain proactive and reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies in their day-to-day identity-management. The symbiotic nature of these processes should also be recognised. Through the organisation's socialisation of the mature students the university should encourage the production of positive narratives about becoming a mature student, perhaps through the presentation of symbols or stories of typical, successful mature student identity-creation. The organisation could also encourage the use of effective proactive and reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies that will protect the mature student-identity, perhaps by providing training in the use of such strategies though classes on topics such as time-management or stress-reduction. The interrelated nature of these processes should be considered here, for example if the overarching narrative produced by an individual is a dysfunctional one then the proactive and/or reactive/adaptive identity-management strategies used will be attempting to protect the integrity of the dysfunctional identity.

Given the positive feedback provided by the participants of university one in their discussion of the mature student summer school, the use of such a socialising event would be recommended. Such an event should focus on the benefits described by the participants: reducing initial anxiety by allowing the participants to see that others share their fears and anxieties; providing practical tips regarding life in university; and facilitating early socialisation/group formation among the mature students, especially among those doing the same course. However, it should be clear that this type of event will be likely to reinforce the identification with the mature student categorisation, rather than other possible identifications such as with their course/subject, and may also increase the likelihood of disidentification with the younger student population. Perhaps other socialising events within the students' courses/classes, designed so as to accommodate and hold the interest of all the parties concerned, could be utilised as a means of encouraging the mature students to identify with other students based on their shared categorisation, for example as future journalists or nurses.

The effect that receiving feedback from the semester one exams had on the participants of university one was such that a system for providing mature students with regular feedback would be recommended. Attaining good academic results in the semester one exams resulted in the participants perceiving that there was finally concrete evidence that they belonged in the university, and that they had a place there. A system of formal feedback could produce this effect earlier than the end of the first semester in order that mature students could gain confidence earlier in the academic year. Given that bad results in the semester one exams were also constructed as giving a definitive indication of one not belonging in the university, a system of formal feedback might also attend to weaker students earlier in the year by providing them

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with support and encouraging them away from the creation of a mature student-identity based on a narrative of academic weakness, which could lead to ongoing dissonance and possibly the exiting of the context in order to eliminate that dissonance.

17.5. Future Research
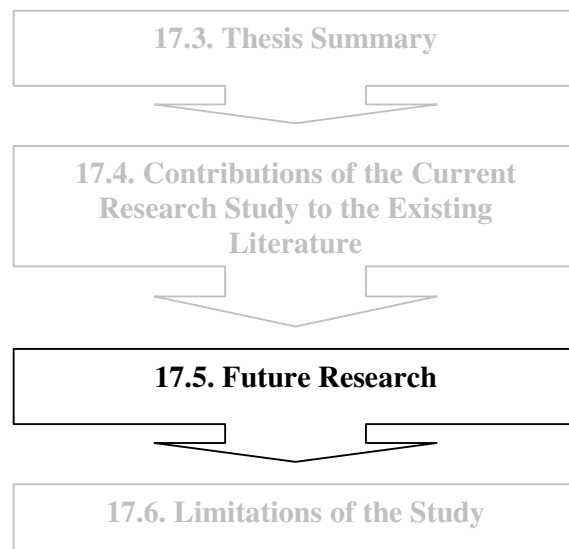
Figure 106. The structure of chapter seventeen: 17.5. Future research

From the current research study of identity-structure and processes of identity-creation and identity-management several possibilities exist for future research (see figure 106). In a general sense future research can take from the fact that the results delivered in this thesis utilised terminology that did not utilise metaphors of physicality and movement, and hence did not reify a view of identity as an objective entity, and also that the concepts examined were placed in their proper context.

Future research could take the methodological framework utilised in the current research study and utilise it to explore individuals' identity-creation processes in different contexts, groups or organisations, for example analysing identity-creation in army recruits, trainee accountants or those joining religious fundamentalist groups. Individuals who have to recreate their identity-portfolio due to the death of a significant other, retiring or those displaced by war or natural disaster could also be studied. This could be carried out using a theory-led paradigm, taking the model delivered by the current research study's results, operationalising it, and investigating whether the new data corresponded to that model, or using a data-led paradigm, as was used in the current research study, in order to produce further in-depth, rich data relating to identity-structure and processes of identity-creation and identity-management.

Future research could focus more specifically on the identity-management processes of individuals who are not engaged in identity-creation, and this again could be used to study different groups of people, for example analysing the identity-management strategies of criminals, the long-term unemployed or entrepreneurs. An implication for this kind of research, arising from the current study, is that while the central role that contexts such as family and work play in peoples' lives should be acknowledged, the focus of the research should not be defined narrowly by studying only one or two contexts in the individual's life. If such a narrow focus is taken the influence on the individual's life from contexts such as religion, hobbies, music or friends will be missed.

Another possibility for future research studies would be for a research study to expand on research findings from the current research finding by taking one aspect of the current research study and focusing specifically on that phenomenon or concept.

Several possibilities stem from this. For example, research could focus on how individuals construct themselves in terms of their motivations with regard to a particular context. Research could focus on how identity-creation and/or identity-management processes differ between individuals at different points in the lifespan, for example between adolescents and adults at midlife or in old age. Another possibility for future research would be to focus on the concept of identity-cues or identity primes and how they can prompt particular identity-change. A researcher could do this by examining the effect on self-construction/identity-related discourse of having different physical objects, for example those commonly related to a work context or home context, in the proximity of the participant during data collection. Rather than using semi-structured interviewing as the current research study did, future research could utilise other methods such as open-interviews, diary-keeping, observation, focus groups or some combination of these. Other analytic approaches could also be utilised, for example an interpretative phenomenological analytical study of the potentially highly emotional experience of exiting one context to enter another, as was seen in the current research study, would be a valuable research study.

Another possibility for future study is that quantitative, follow-up research could be used to study, on a larger scale, aspects of the current research study, for example the affect of factors such as age and gender on identity-creation and identity-management processes, in a way not possible in this study given the small sample used. The generalisability, from a deductive paradigm perspective, of the model or concepts from the model delivered by the current research study could be assessed by this type of research.

17.6. Limitations of the Study

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│          17.3. Thesis Summary            │
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│     17.4. Contributions of the Current   │
│      Research Study to the Existing       │
│                Literature                 │
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│          17.5. Future Research           │
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│     17.6. Limitations of the Study       │
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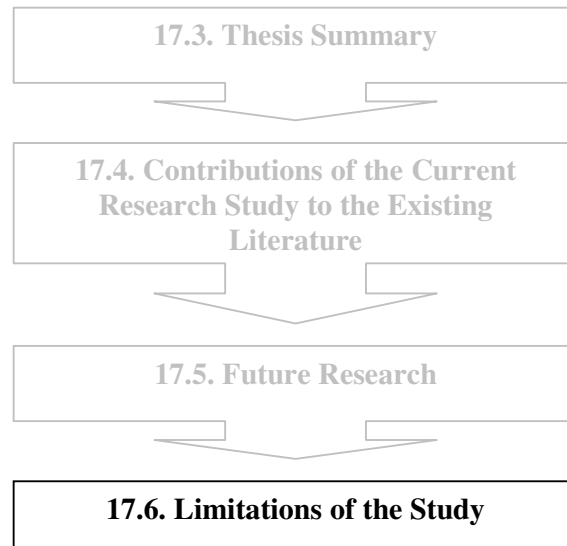
Figure 107. The structure of chapter seventeen: 17.6. Limitations of the study

There are various limitations or shortcomings in how the current research study was carried out that must be highlighted in order that a full and transparent view of the research can be achieved (see figure 107) The shortcomings of the study here can be seen as being due to the nature of the issues under investigation and also to the limitations caused by practical concerns to do with doctoral research.

As was highlighted in the literature review, the scope and generality of the research study is limited by the specificity of the socio-historical, cultural and geographical context in which the research was conducted. The identity-processes described in this study may not reflect such processes in other times, places or cultures, as these elements influence an individual's identity. For example, it is possible that if more universities had been included in the current research study this could have led to richer data being collected. Also, the two universities included in the research study were located in urban settings, therefore conducting research with

individuals from rural settings may have added another dimension to the available data. However, this does not lessen the importance of building up such models of identity-structure and identity-processes, which can be used to further explore the connections and/or differences between individuals in different socio-historical, chronological, cultural and geographical contexts. The research study could also have benefited from the inclusion of other types of organisational entrant, from different types of organisation, for example occupational organisations and perhaps from other geographical and cultural contexts.

Another limitation of the research study is related to the methods used to collect data. The LDSB and research interview necessarily captured data about the issues under scrutiny though a contrived interaction that is outside of the participant's normal, everyday experience. Therefore the data was retrospectively constructed through an interaction between the participant and the interviewer and must be seen as being just that, and not an objective reflection of any events or relationships described. A more 'hands-on', observational method, perhaps in addition to interviewing, may have yielded more 'natural' data from which to explore the participants' construction of themselves and their social reality. However, a researcher's presence in an observational capacity would still influence the interactions observed. A potential way of lessening this influence would be to use video or audio recording, although in this instance equipping the participants with video or audio recording equipment to collect data in many different social situations across a number of different contexts was beyond the scope of the current research study. It would have also raised ethical issues around the recording of individuals around the participant who were not formally 'recruited' into the study.

The manner in which the current research study's data was managed, screened and categorised is also an area where potential shortcoming may exist. Although an intercoder check was utilised to check the quality of the coding list used in the data analysis, and the research study as a whole exists within the system of checks and balances that the doctoral research process provides, there are still potential problems underlying the fact that a lone researcher conducted the research study. While the researcher attempted to engage in sufficient self-reflection with regard to personal biases, preconceptions etc., in order that these would not unduly affect the research process, potentially damaging subjectivity with regard to issues of data-screening and data categorisation may have skewed research results in an unacceptable manner. If more researchers, perhaps a team of researchers, had participated in the data collection, preparation, screening, categorisation and analysis processes this would have lessened the potential impact of one researcher's subjective view of the data.

The temporal element of the data collection process is another point at which the research design used in this study can be seen as having shortcomings. The data was collected at two times, at either end of a seven month period. The quality of the data could potentially have been increased by collecting more data during those seven months, through the conducting of further interviews, giving the participants diaries to fill out on a regular basis or through the use of other data collection techniques. The quality of the data could also have, potentially, been improved by extending the time frame of the study. However, implementing any of these alterations to the design of the current research study would have stretched the available resources beyond their limit.

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Appendices

Life Domain Study

A Qualitative written answer booklet

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

BUSINESS SCHOOL

James Brunton

Dublin City University Business School

(Any queries email: james.brunton2@mail.dcu.ie)

Introduction:

This study is completely confidential. Any names, of individuals or organisations, will not show in the printed project and I will be the only one with access to the completed booklet. If you don't feel comfortable with any of the questions you should feel free to not answer, and if you want to stop at any time you can. Also, if at any time after you've completed the booklet you feel uncomfortable with any part of what you answered or have any queries you can contact me. If I feel that there are any sensitive issues in your answers, that perhaps might identify you too easily, I will contact you and check with you as to whether you're comfortable with it being included or not. I will also notify you as to the date that the project is going to be printed, as that would be the last day you would have to voice any concerns.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name:

Age:

Are You: Male   Female

Are You: Married/Living with Partner   Separated/Divorced   Single   Other_____

Occupation of Spouse/Partner: Employed Full-Time   Employed Part-Time

Full Time Home Manager   Unemployed   Other_____

Number of Children:

Ages of Children:

Number of Children still living at home:

EDUCATION

Highest level of Education attained: Leaving Cert.   3rd level Cert.   3rd level Diploma

Degree   Postgrad.   Other_____

Current course being undertaken:

OCCUPATION:

Sector: Private (for profit)   Private (not for profit)   State   Semi-State   Other public (e.g. Education, Hospitals)   Self-Employed   Other_____

Management Grade: Yes   No

Length of employment prior to returning to University:

CONTACT DETAILS

Phone Number: **Email and/or Postal Address:**

Q.1 On the following page there is a table to be completed.

In the **first** column you write down the different parts that you feel make up your life, one part in each box. This is to say that if you had to divide your life into different parts or sections, what would these sections be.

In the **second** column you say how satisfied you are with each part of your life, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being very dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied.

In the **third** column you say how important each part of your life is to you, placing 1 beside the most important part of your life, 2 beside the second most important, and so on.

For the **forth** column please examine the following list:

Meet my own standards	**Values**
Beliefs	**Enjoying myself**
Recognition	**Money**
Personal achievement	**Approval**
Fun	**Extrinsic rewards**

For each part of your life please choose the five most important things to you in terms of this part, from the list above and place them, in order of importance in the spaces provided. Then reduce this choice of five to the two most important things in this part of your life. Then reduce this choice of two to the most important thing in this part of your life.

THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF YOUR LIFE	Level Of Satisfaction on a scale of 1-10	Order Of Importance	Choose the 5 most important things to you in this part of your life, from the list above and place them, in order, in the spaces provided. Then reduce this choice to the 2 most important things and then to the most important thing in this part of your life. Repeat the exercise for each part of your life.		
			1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2.	1.
			1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2.	1.
			1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2.	1.
			1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2.	1.
			1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2.	1.

Q.2 How satisfied would you say you are in your life **<u>overall</u>** on a scale

of one to ten, 1 being very dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied? You

may give a brief explanation for your score if you wish.

Level of satisfaction =_____

Q.3 For each part of your life you identified in column 1 of the table above please

give its name and a short description of what makes up this part of your life?/Within

this part of your life what roles/positions do you fill?

<u>**Appendix 2**</u>

<u>**Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview One**</u>

Introduction:
 This interview is completely confidential. Any names, of individuals or organisation, will not show in the printed project and I will be the only one with access to the recordings of the interview. If you don't feel comfortable with any of the questions you should feel free to not answer, or if you want to stop the interview at any time you can. Also if at any time after the interview you feel uncomfortable with any part of the interview or have any queries you can contact me and, if you wish to, veto the interview or part of the interview. If I feel that there are any sensitive parts of the interview, that perhaps might identify you too easily, I will contact you and check with you as to whether you're comfortable with it being included or not. I will also notify you as to the date that the project is going to be printed, as that would be the last day you would have to voice any concerns. Is that all right?

Role Specific Identities

| Discuss existing role specific identities as described in map | Firstly I want to briefly ask you about all the different parts of your life that you described in the Identification Context Map.

(Referring to each role-specific identity) Is your description of this area of your life accurate, is there anything else you'd like to add to it?

-(Referring to the motivator lists provided by the participant in the IC map) Why did you choose to put the motivators in this order? (for each role specific identity)

-Why are the different parts of your life ordered in this way, in terms of their importance to you? |

Global identity

Create identification context and Exploration of global identity	Up until now we've been talking about the specific situations that make up your life, so now if we could look at how would you describe that part of you that is essentially you, you at your core, away from any specific situations?
	(if it doesn't make sense to them)-Ok, so out of the different parts of your life that we've talked about, which would be the best reflection of who you are as a person?
	So in terms of this part of you, how much difference is there between this core part of yourself and how you are or how you have to be in other parts of your life?
Power	How important, to you, is this part of your life, this core part of you?
Dominant Motivational Profile Use flashcards, in conjunction with created map	(not possible if the global id is not perceived) So which of these words/phrases would indicate what is important to you in this situation (??)? Choose 5
	Could you put these in order of importance? >>>Why have you put them in this order?
	Can you remove three of these words to leave the two most important? >>>Why can these be let go?
	Could you now narrow it down to the most important? >>>Why have you chosen this over the other? >>>Why is this the most important? >>>Why is this the one you couldn't do without?

Identification Context Change

| Exploring identification context change | Looking at the different parts of your life that we've talked about already, are there factors in your life that make it easy or difficult to move between the different parts of your life? >>>Do other people in your life play a part in this? >>>Is the physical distance between the different parts of your life or the time it takes to go from one part to another an issue? |
| Pre-emptive changes | Do you take any steps to prepare yourself when you're moving between these different parts of your life? (if yes)>>>what kind of preparation do you take? (if no)>>>So do you feel that it's easy for you to move between the different parts of your life? |

Dissonance	Do you feel that the different parts of your life clash with one another, or interfere with one another? (if yes)>>>Why do you think this happens?-How do you experience it? (if no)>>>Do you feel that there is harmony between the different parts of your life?-What steps do you take to ensure that the different parts of your life don't clash?
Adaptive strategies	(if yes)When parts of your life clash what steps do you take to stop the clashing occurring or to resolve the situation?
Similarity or difference	What parts of your life would you see as being similar to each other and what parts would you see as being different to each other?
Life satisfaction	(referring to previously discussed life domain contexts/identities and satisfaction scores given in IC map) How satisfied with your life would you say you are overall? (referring back to score given in IC map) What takes away from that satisfaction? (possibly referring back to previously discussed clashes between life domain contexts)? How could you be more satisfied?

Central or peripheral participant in a particular setting	In your class in dcu would you say you are centrally involved in the class and its goings on?
	(If yes)>>> Do you feel this gives you any influence in your class?
	     >>>How does being so involved make you feel about the class? Does it decrease any anxiety you might have felt about joining a group like this?
	(if no)>>> So would you feel on the periphery of the class?
	     >>>How does this make you feel about the class? Does it make you feel anxious or angry? How does this impact on your experience of being in the group?
	
	Since you arrived in Dcu what activities have you been involved in besides actual lectures?
	(if they have)>>>have these helped you feel more or less anxious about settling into the university or centrally involved in your class?

Psychologically meaningful group	In your class are there people with whom you identify more than others? (if no)>>>Does that mean you identify with everyone on the same level or that you don't feel you identify with anyone in the (class/group)

	>>>Does this affect how you feel about being a member of the (class/group)? Less anxious?
	What do you feel you have in common with these people with whom you identify?
	Does having these people around make your time in (this setting) easier? Does it reduce anxiety? Why?
	Do you talk to these people about the other parts of your life, outside (this setting)? Why ?

Any Final Thoughts	In terms of everything we've been talking about, do you have any final thoughts, anything you think might be missing from the discussion or anything like that?
	Thank you very much…

Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview Two

Retrospective perception of time one

Discuss how they now retrospectively view how they were at time one	Firstly, just for a minute or two, I want you to look back on the start of the year when I talked to you first and just describe how you were getting on that time.

Review Identification Context Map

Check if the IC's in the ICM still represent an accurate picture of there life.	Looking at this page again, is this still an accurate picture of what's going on in your life? >>>Are there any new parts to your life? >>>Are any of the parts gone or changed somehow? Has the order of importance that you would put them in changed (have new sheet for this?) Looking at these words which represented what was important in each of these areas, do any of them seem not to fit now or not make sense?

Central/peripheral participation +PMG

Examine the current state of their social groupings/ identification	Do you feel centrally involved in the class and its goings on at the moment? >>>yes> Do you feel this gives you any influence in your class? >>>no> so do you feel on the periphery of the class then? So how do you feel about being in your class at the moment, in terms of anxiety levels? So at the moment are you taking part in any activities outside of lecture-time/coursework?

Psychologically meaningful group	So within your class at the moment, are there people that you identify with more than others? >>>would you feel that as a group you're all centrally involved in the class and it's going on? >>>what do you feel you have in common? >>>would these people be the ones that you communicate with most? What do you talk about

Identification Context Change

Examine the interactions between Identification Contexts, Identification Context Changing and Clashing	So in terms of managing all the parts of your life what are the things at the moment that are making things easier or more difficult? >>>Are there any people affecting this >>>Are there any issues of physical distance/time affecting this At the moment are there things that you do to prepare yourself for moving from one part of your life to another? >>>is it easy to move between the parts of your life? Do you feel there are parts of your life that are clashing at the moment >>>what do you do to solve that when it happens?

Perceived Identification Context Compatibility

What is the degree of perceived compatibility at the moment. (use additional sheet)	So looking again at these scores here, one by one, what would you score them now? Why this new score (or not)? Have there been any major events in the last few months that would have impacted on these scores changing?

Appendix 4

Coding List

Code	Code Meaning
,	Natural pause
(pause)	Pause that is longer than a natural pause but shorter then three seconds
(long pause)	Pause that is longer than three seconds
(laugh)	Laughing
(missing word)	Word could not be heard on tape during transcription

Appendix 5

The Nvivo 2 qualitative analysis software allows a user to classify, sort and arrange thousands of pieces of information, examine complex relationships in the data and combine subtle analysis with linking, shaping, searching and modeling. It allows a user to manage large amounts of qualitative data and thus makes the process of analysis more efficient than basic pen and paper methods. Nvivo software, now updated to Nvivo 7 is developed by QSR international (www.qsrinternational.com).